

extent at least the increases reflect a real gain in agricultural purchasing power. That the state of unbalance between agriculture and industry would sooner or later be rectified has been inevitable. Moved by the disparity of return, capital and labor that could be spared from the farms have been gradually turning away from agriculture and into industry, which means that fundamental factors have been slowly shaping themselves for an improvement in agriculture, quite apart from the changes in which the war and its factors have intervened. Largely because of the rise in farm products, which has offset declines in other commodities, the price indexes give evidence of a stability

that is somewhat misleading. Apart from the rise in the grains and cotton there is no evidence that the gradual downward trend of prices has been checked. In fact a number of important commodities have shown further declines. Included among these are copper, lead, rubber, silk, coffee, and pig iron, while steel prices are none too firmly established at the present levels, which are below those of a year ago.

Whether or not the coal strike will eventually become a factor in prices remains to be seen, but the first three months of the lay-off have caused no disturbance in the trade.

—National City Bank: Current Report.

## The End of the Trail

By PERCY A. HILL

It happened twenty years ago, in Nueva Ecija, when that province was still in the making. True, it had been looked off the line of Pampanga a century before by a royal governor who baptized it with the name of his native province in distant Spain. But excepting a nucleus of old towns in the southern part and a fringe of ancient settlements along the rugged coast of the Pacific, Nueva Ecija twenty years ago was to all intents and purposes a new country. It was a succession of *cogonales* and forested creeks in the northern part, a paradise of the deer and wild-boar hunter. Where towns had been built, life was little more than a change of seasons, seed-time and harvest. The struggle for existence was never keen, fever and epidemics kept the population stationary.

News was a month old when it came, which was not too often; the elders of the towns and villages had not yet been taught a new way of sucking eggs by the younger generation supplied with imperfect knowledge from school-books. There was a simple life, for they did not then possess the oratorical leader who now, in a kind of feudal magnanimity, refers to them as *my people*. But their latent curiosity was insatiable, given the least morsel to gnaw upon.

A stranger coming into one of those towns over the sun-burnt trails was instantly the object of this curiosity. A few moments after his arrival, if he were at all communicative—and indeed it was difficult to be otherwise unless accompanied by a retinue of servants, themselves animated newspapers—his errand, reasons or motive, right or wrong, would quickly become the property of all the inhabitants. They all had a wonderful capacity for absorbing news, after the manner of the ancient Greeks. Time, however, has run its ceaseless course. Most of the rude forefathers, the *matandas*, now rest peacefully in the campo santos; a change, inevitable, has come in with the new generation addicted to book-learning, stump-speaking and flamboyant neckwear.

Nowadays the people of Nueva Ecija pay little attention to the stranger within their gates; such is civilization, take it or leave it. But twenty years ago things were different, and when a swarthy, close-knit *Americano* rode into a certain pueblo one day, with a pack-pony of supplies, the curious were on tiptoe with anxiety. The stranger, indifferent to the emotions he had raised, dismounted leisurely and sought out the *presidente*. This factum hastily donned his official coat, grasped his cane, badge of his office, and, still slipperless, presented himself before the new arrival. Courtesies were exchanged, and the two presently repaired to the *presidente's* house. Proffered liquid refreshment, the stranger mixed himself a drink that would now puzzle the Commission, and gulped the beverage down with audible appreciation. His worthy host explained his thirst by the torrid and dusty trail he had traveled. Talk began after the inner man had been further satisfied with the usual visitor's meal of chicken and rice.

The stranger, puffing a postprandial *Londres*, told the *presidente* he was about to become a resident of the town; he would be in charge of a deserted plantation at Irurlong,

a vast tract of virgin land that paid taxes to the government but remained immaculately virgin of gain to its absentee owners.

The plantation lay in a valley between cordilleras of lofty mountains. It comprised both hill and dale and bore to the uninitiated all the outward signs of an agricultural paradise. The stranger presently made his abode in one of the thatched huts on the place; but he also, so to speak, maintained a town house, in order to be in more convenient proximity to the Chinese *tiendas* stocking the native firewaters, *ginebra* and *vino*. His breakfast, it came to be known, was often a Kentucky breakfast—a loaf of bread and a bottle of hard liquor. The bread he was wont to share or give whole to masterless dogs, that ignored his bibulous failing and appreciated his liberality. They met his advances with frank waggings; their confidence was more easily gained than that of the townspeople.

These townspeople held somewhat aloof, not yet having found out who the stranger was, or what. Some opined he was a doctor, seeing him sample many bottles; and others, that he was a Protestant preacher, a *barbubut-sabon*, which literally is soap-suds, from his copious and expressive oratory. But still others thought that he was a miner, looking for the fugitive, mother lode. On one of my occasional visits to the town, indeed, the justice of the peace confided to me in a confidential whisper that he had found a *mina de tanso*, which would be a brass mine! He desired me to go in with him in preempting this discovery before the handsome stranger should find it himself.

Gradually we came to know the stranger, his hopes and failings, vices and virtues. We took his name to be an adopted one. "My moniker is B—," he said, and as B—we accepted him. Ordinarily he was a man of even temper, but under stress of emotion he displayed a lurid and unexpurgated vocabulary which could best be interpreted by a series of exclamation points and dashes.

This eloquent flow was once provoked when he was mounting a balky horse. A lady who chanced to overhear the stranger's remarks hurled anger back at him and condemned him in terms almost as robust as his own; then she noised her opinion abroad. However, we did not pay much attention to her anathemas, for we knew there are exceptions to every rule. Furthermore, she was not popular with us. She was one of those women who think all men are created being born so the desired to put pants on the Venus de Milo and clothe the statuette of fountains. Many old-timers no doubt still remember her, and chuckle over her crusading proclivities.

B—was, as I have intimated, a handsome rake, with a heavy dark mustache and x-ray eyes. He not only talked well, but betrayed an excellent education by quoting scraps of Latin and other dead languages. He dearly loved an argument, if it related to doctrinal theory. But his rare lapses into autobiography disclosed nothing whatever about his home or his people, the few good books he possessed had all their flyleaves removed. We opined that these missing leaves had borne his real name, and in the manner of the border we concluded that what that name was was none of our business.

His duties as *encargado* of the plantation were not onerous. But he lived on there, in the *cogon*-thatched hut hard by the spider-legged *camarines* for the rice, back of which were the deep mud wallows loved by the slate-skinned *carabao*. Things looked as if B—had met with misfortune on life's way and did not think further struggle was worthwhile. After a certain age, no matter what the cataclysmic experience, there is no real change in the soul of man.

He had a whimsical theory that life was a journey, a path down which the soul trod, a trail that had its beginning and end; and one could make it joyfully or not, as his cosmos taught him and his digestion dictated. A wife and family made, he contended, slow going; foot-free one traveled the faster to his predestined goal. But fast or slow, happy or sad, one did come at last to the point where all journeys ended. He was also optimistic about his wild

(Continued on page 22)

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### THE END OF THE TRAIL—Continued

corner of Nueva Ecija. In vain we told him that the man who hopes to make a fortune overnight is the type of man who hopes he can win consistently, overlooking the fact that nobody wins all the time, not even the man engaged in honest endeavor—with money in hand.

There are things, too, that even money cannot buy: hardships, lessons in experience, the devotion of friends, self-control and the task well done. There is, of course, the pursuit of happiness, but the actual wealth of life comes to but few. Some are happy only when the morning dawns; hours a day; some can loaf through life and enjoy it; others hold to the middle of the road. The main thing is to get a kick out of life, not merely to live as if life were a sudden duty. The end remains the same for all, but achievement counts in the last analysis. One might say that B— was a soldier of fortune.

"O dark dividing sea and alien plain,  
Life was cheap—therefore he sold it;  
Gold was good, he could not hold it—  
And now perhaps he knows his loss or gain!"

He of course had no flair for life in the *burndocks*, though his urge was toward the primitive. He would discuss frequently the idea of establishing a trading post with the woolly-haired Negritos, aborigines who foraged for a wild livelihood on the mountain border of the plantation overlooking the Pacific. Time and again, when I rode into the dusty decayed town, he welcomed me as a long-lost brother. Only men who have dwelt alone in the far-off places know just what these random visits with men of his own breed meant to B—. The city dweller is ignorant of the frontier, anyway; he has a word of companionship all the time. But B— had not. Five or six times during a year, some one who spoke his language and hailed from the home-country would ride up to his shack, and stop a while to exchange ideas with him. These were red-letter days with him, irrespective of how the calendar printed them. Sundays are festa days; he was likely to forget altogether, but not visitor-days.

One I ran across him musing on the banks of the river, el Rio Coronel, of which I told him the history. During the early part of the last century, when the decrepit town was temporarily the provincial capital, a colonel of Spanish infantry had paid it a visit of inspection. Coming down to the ford when the river was in full flood, he would not heed the native ferryman who cautioned him to wait until the flood subsided. He spurred his mount into the stream, intending to swim across. Half-way to the opposite bank, both he and his horse were struck broadside by a huge tree floating on the crest of the torrent. Knocked unconscious, he tumbled into the stream, where he was grabbed hold of and borne away ahead of the floating tree. He had been seized by a crocodile, one of those 20-foot saurians that infest the inland waters of the Philippines and are most active during freshets, seeking their prey in troubled waters—wherein they show much wisdom.

But this particular crocodile, gigantic as he was, could not make a single gulp of the burly colonel; he had to measure his prospective feast by the axiom that the container must be larger than the thing contained, and instinct drove him to pilot his burden along to some convenient sandbar downstream where he might enjoy a meal in leisure. The colonel, who had regained consciousness in the cool waters, was in no position to argue the question with the crocodile, which swam diagonally cross-stream with him. Now the colonel confronted a precarious situation: he and the crocodile were nearing a sandy islet amidstream, where his end would be swift and sanguinary; turning, therefore, as well as he could, since the animal clamped its jaws the tighter at his least movement, he reached over vigorously at last and with quick and dexterous thrusts gouged the saurian's eyes out.

With violent lashings the reptile freed him, and grasping the trailing grasses on the bank he pulled himself to safety from the creature's

tail. He was a man of direct action, and evidently a bear for punishment. The current beyond the islet remained to be crossed, and the colonel plunged into it. Another crocodile held him before he had swum ten meters, beld him submerged by deflating and sinking below the surface, drowned this unfortunate but intrepid official of His Majesty the King, and devoured him afterward. So it came about a century ago that the river got its name of the Rio Coronel, which it retains.

By the time this tale had been told, it was time to repair to the shack for a drink and further discussion on the trading-post project.

When B— at last lost his job—the owners, without rhyme or reason, having expected results from a single man that could only have been effected by a series of favorable factors of which supervision was but one—he came back from Manila to open his trading post, bartering with the Negritos for resins, rattan, beeswax and other such materials. How many white-men have tried this since the days of Saindo, only to encounter misfortune, and death from jungle fever and loneliness? For each success, how many uncounted failures? B—'s supplies included a five-gallon can of *vino*, for himself. Approaching the divide, his carriers all deserted him; harvest was near at hand and the yellowing rice, irresistible to the native peasant, beckoned the men to the fields. B—, at wit's end, threw up a grass shelter over his supplies and made his rendezvous with death right there on the trail.

It was indeed the end of the trail for him. He camped by the can of *vino*, and the consumption of this *ad libitum* had its result. To this final gargantuan attack his stalwart body at last succumbed. One servant had stood by faithfully, and as the shadows gathered B— sent this boy to the *presidente* with a request for aid and an appeal to any American who might be in town to come to his relief.

I happened to be riding through the town when this message came. The least I could do, of course, was to go to B—. Another American joined me. The way through the barren plantation ran past grassy ravines opened up by the seasonal floods racing to join the brimming river and rejoicing in such aboriginal names as *Dupungo*, *Bugnaan*, and *Aragoog*. But that morning there was no rain, the sky was a cerulean blue flecked with a few fleecy clouds drifting in from the Pacific. The thick jungle along the trail was a haven of forest warblers and droning insect life. The day wore on, but greater haste was impossible; nature herself, it seemed, shared the East's passive resistance. As the sunset flooded radiantly, but fleetingly, over the slopes of Mount Mingan, we topped the divide and began the descent into the valley and the search for the sick man in his grass shelter. We found him at last, and greeted him with a jovial outburst; but it needed no doctor to tell that we could do little good. B— was about to depart upon his last hike, into those eternal wilds from which no tales come back from the adventurers.

Of course we concealed our insights, confining ourselves to cheerful comment on the future of commerce in the province. I am afraid the projected trading post grew miraculously into a great emporium of commerce, and its founder into like reputation and affluence.

He was, however, too far gone to eat anything, and we had neglected to bring anything along to drink. The boy hashed up a kind of evening meal, and we two comforted ate it. After this doleful meal B— became as communicative as ever he was—with nothing to say as to who he really was or where he came from. At intervals he would lapse into incoherent mutterings. Then he would expound some obscure point of religious dogma, to all of which we agreed. My *compañero*, who never believed in allowing anything to detain him, now summoned a tubular organ in Manila at the time. B— took it up. In those early days I habitually carried music with me in the form of the worthy but ill-esteemed harmonica. At this juncture I essayed to blow a few tunes on the handy instrument. B— responded to this immediately. As a favor he asked me to play his favorite songs.

So on the night air in the gloomy vale behind



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Mout Banay-Banay, rose the strains of *Break the News to Mother, The Blue and the Gray, and The Girl I Left in Sunny Tennessee*. B——requesting it, I played these songs over and over again, while the jaded wanderer beat time with a quivering finger. Midnight came and passed. I was still blowing, with sore lips, on that wheezy mouth-organ. The impromptu concert seemed to soothe him with thoughts of other times and the homeland. His boy and our guides and carriers had long since gone to sleep, leaving the situation to us alone. Suddenly the wanderer sat erect, interrupting a repeated rendition of *Break the News to Mother*. He stretched his arms before him, his face lighted up with a wonderful recognition.

"Oh, Mother! Poor Mother!" he whispered. For a moment he appeared to listen to a voice. "Wait, Mother! I am coming!" he repeated, two or three times, and with these words and a glorified smile on his ashen lips he sank back dead.

Dead. Dead in the jungle of Nueva Ecija. We had known there was no hope, but the end had come quickly, just like that. Maybe his vision of heaven was realized.

#### Quien sabe?

Whoever he was, he took the secret with him; nothing in his effects told any story of his past. We composed the poor body as well as we could, and kept it company by the fitful fire until the gray dawn streaked the bosom of the Pacific. When the sun flashed into splendor once more, and the woods crickets began their interminable drone, we dug a grave and buried him, placing only a bungled cross at his head. Under this, no doubt, he lies as quietly as if his passing had been marked by an admiring and mourning nation. He had found peace in a land where there were no doctrinal quarrels. A short distance from his grave in the jungle, surges rolling in from the Pacific chant a common requiem for all, and him as well, who sleep within their sound. It is an anthem that has never ceased since the world began.

"And they who husbanded the golden grain, And they who flung it to the winds like rain, Alike to no such aureate earth are turned, As, buried once, men want dug up again."

Since this incident occurred, Nueva Ecija has become the islands' leading rice-producing province, through immigration of many thrifty Ilokans from the north, and will have become a successful rice planters' colony on the industry in the Philippines and a writer of quaint tales for which the demand extends from Manila to New York.—Ed.

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## Dr. Youngberg's 1926 Agricultural Report

Bureau of Agriculture

Comparatively speaking the year under review was a successful one but less profitable: for while there was an increase of 2% in the total area planted to the leading crops their total value declined .3%, because of the great reduction in sugar cane production, the area planted thereto and the prices commanded.

Weather conditions in 1926 were better than in 1925. There were periods of heavy rains and floods alternating with dry periods, but the losses from this source were only 5% of the total area planted in 1926 against 2% in 1925. Plant pests and diseases decreased too, during 1926, the damage done to the crops having been only 1% of the total area planted in 1926 as against 2% the year before.

Palay again broke the record this year. The largest crop ever raised before was that for 1925, which was 45,652,600 cavans. The area planted during 1926 was 1,756,960 hectares and the production

**Rough Rice** 47,780,000 cavans, valued at P204,051,110. The corresponding figures for 1925 were 1,725,500 hectares, 45,652,600 cavans and P192,179,270, or an increase of 2.5 and 6% respectively. This increase was partly because of a larger area planted and partly because of better weather conditions, the selection of better seeds and in general better methods of farming. Average yield per hectare—27.19 cavans; average price per cavan—P4.30 for 1926, against 26.46 cavans and P4.20, respectively, for 1925.

Adverse weather conditions reduced this crop 3% in area, 23% in the production of sugar, 1% in that of panochas and 28% in the value

**Sugar Cane** of all sugar cane products, as compared with the preceding year. Area planted for 1926—231,840 hectares; yield—8,195,370 piculs of sugar, 516,020 piculs of panocha, 4,298,790 liters of basi and 5,935,540 liters of molasses, with a total value of P81,137,140.

The coconut crop is steadily increasing every year and in 1926 there were 2,770,930 new trees planted, bringing the total number planted to 22,908,700, or an increase of 10.7%.

**Coconuts** of 2%. Of this number over 59 per cent or 54,650,400 are in bearing as against 53,165,880 in 1925. The average yield of nuts per tree during 1926 was 30, the same as in 1925, but the many new trees that came into bearing increased the crop of nuts 3%, making a total of 1,627,379,000. The yield of tuba was greater during the year by 13% not only because tuba was collected

from more trees but also because there was more of the crop, the production being 99,001,800 liters in 1926 as against 87,250,130 in 1925.

Of fresh nuts 34% were sold, the increase being principally on account of the comparatively new industry of making desiccated coconut. Fresh nuts sold during the year for both the desiccated coconut industry and home consumption—148,759,000 against 110,678,000 in 1925. Increase in copra—1% or 5,780,700 piculs as against 5,726,800 piculs in 1925. The local manufacture of coconut oil, however, was reduced by 10% or 1,787,810 in 1926 as compared with 1,993,450 in 1925.

All five coconut products as well as the nuts commanded higher prices in 1926 than the year before; nuts—P4.00 per 100, copra—P11.28 per picul, coconut oil—P4.77 per liter, and tuba—P.09 per liter during 1926, as against P3.00, P10.47, P4.3 and P.08 respectively during 1925. Aggregate value of all products of the coconut P81,369,370 in 1926 as against P71,847,980 in 1925, an increase of 13%. Iloos Norte, Isabela, Rizal and Tarlac, the provinces which formerly had the smallest number of trees planted are the ones that registered the highest increase—from 16 to 32%.

Both the area planted to abaca and the production increased, but prices were lower. At the end of the year 1926, there were 492,050

**Abaca** hectares planted to abaca which yielded 3,036,150 piculs as against 477,110 hectares and 2,853,570 piculs in 1925, an increase of 3 and 6% respectively. Price per picul—P21.93 in 1926 and P22.53 for 1925. But while production in 1925 was seven piculs the average for 1926 was eight piculs, thus increasing the total value 3%.

Davao, Misamis and Lanao had the largest increase in total area planted, 10 to 13%—while for Cavite, Marinduque and Tayabas the area decreased from 22 to 30%.

Hectares 533,570 were planted to corn yielding 7,899,730 cavans which sold for P37,370,300. In 1925 there were 422,380 hectares yielding 7,606,110 cavans and P30,767,250, or

**Corn** 2.4 and 21%, respectively. The considerable increase in the value of this production was due to a substantial rise in the average price which was P4 per cavan in 1925 and P4.70 in 1926. Bataanes, Sulu, Zamboales, Tarlac, Palawan, Rizal, Catubato and Albay had decreases in the area planted of from 16 to 47%. White Davao, Samarines Norte, Nueva Vizcaya, Agusan and Ma-

rinduque had similar increases as compared with 1925. Cebu, Oriental Negros, Leyte, Isabela and Cagayan also registered increases during 1926, their combined area planted being 4% more than in the preceding year.

This crop also recorded increases both in the area planted and in the production which were 4 and 8%, respectively, though its total value was a trifle less than that for the preceding year because of a drop of nearly P1.00 per quintal. Area planted in 1926—74,790 hectares; yield—988,110 quintals; value—P11,943,460, as against 71,630 hectares, 910,810 quintals and 11,891,590 for 1925. Average price—P12.09 per quintal in 1926, and P13.05 for 1926. Average yield per hectare was the same in both years.

The production of this fiber decreased 6% in 1926 as compared with 1925, and in the value of the whole crop 5%, only 427,850 piculs being harvested in 1926, against 456,000 piculs the year before. Value—P5,682,530. The area planted is steadily increasing every year, however, that for 1926 being 33,350 hectares as against 31,100 in 1925, or an increase of 7%. Average price during 1926—P12.64; for 1925—P12.46 per picul.

These two minor crops also increased in area planted but production of cacao decreased 3%. At the end of the agricultural year 1926, the value was P2,029,400 and the area

**Coffee and Cacao** 2,515,600 coffee as against Cacao 2,000,300 and 2,335,600 respectively in 1925. Production of cacao—1,082,700 kilos in 1926 and 1,111,900 in 1925 and of coffee 1,207,300 kilos in 1926 and 1,178,200 kilos in 1925. Values—P11,119,400 for cacao and P836,700 for coffee during 1926 as against P1,189,100 and P836,300 respectively during 1925. Prices during 1925 and 1926 were P1.07 and P1.03 per kilo of cacao and P.71 and P.69 per kilo of coffee respectively.

Because of the impossibility of completing the compilation of the data for the year 1926 in the short period elapsing between the end of

the year and the date fixed for presenting this report, the figures for animals given here are for the year ending December 31, 1925. Increases in number were registered for all animals during the year 1926 in spite of the fact that for some kinds there were decreases in the rate of birth and for others increases in the rate of mortality. The birth rate for carabao, hogs, goats and sheep increased 2.1%, 3.5, 3.6 and 1.3 respectively, while that for cattle and horses fell 2.6 and 3.9 respectively.