



Technological Unemployment

► THE INVENTION of the cotton gin made cotton the South's principal crop. The steel plow and the reaper hastened the shift of the grain belt from the hills of the East to the prairies of the West. The linotype and the rotary press, by greatly cheapening printed matter and thus increasing its use, have created a crisis in forestry, with easily accessible native stands of timber being wiped out faster than new pulpwood is being grown.

In a little less obvious way, the invention of barbed wire has caused the near-disappearance of the Osage orange, a once familiar high shrub or small tree.

When the prairie lands of the Midwest were being opened up, a century or so ago, the most easily available way of dividing field from field, and keeping stray cattle on the road from getting into the corn, was to plant a hedge. Neither the rail fences made of split logs from cleared land farther east, nor the stone walls of the Atlantic seaboard, were

practicable on the prairies, where there were few trees and even fewer stones.

Most practical hedge plant was the Osage orange. It is a native plant, with its center of distribution in the Ozarks and nearby regions, so it was readily available and already acclimated. It grows rapidly and branches freely if cut back, so can be induced to form a thick, stout hedge in a short time. And it is armed with most formidable thorns, discouraging to would-be animal trespassers.

Early nurserymen grew great stocks of it, and sold young plants by the millions. From the sixties to the nineties of the last century there were literally thousands of miles of Osage hedge. If you went for a buggy-ride in the country, you were almost continuously "hedged in" by the thick shrubs,

trimmed waist-high, on both sides of the road.

Then somebody conceived the idea of putting steel thorns on twisted wire, and invented a machine for making the stuff. A barbed-wire fence took less space than a hedge, which of course claimed several yards of soil on either side of itself for its own nutrition. This materially increased the tillable area of each field.

So the hedges began to decline. Farmers dug them out, or hired professional crews with steam-powered machinery to root them up with giant plows. The smoke of their burning drifted over all the land.

Here and there, stretches of hedge still survive, usually neglected and allowed to grow to full height of 20 or 30 feet. But they are only fragments of what was once the empire of the Osage orange.

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GEOGRAPHY

Falklands' Good Location

► THE BRITISH have in the Falkland islands a stake to bargain with Argentina for food and markets. From the ordinary economic viewpoint, these forestless, sheep-raising small islands have little value. On the other hand, however, they have strategic value to both nations.

The Falkland islands, with a total area about the size of New Jersey, are some 250 miles east of southern Argentina. With natural harbors, capable of development, the group could become a marine center to protect the Argentina coast and to control traffic from the Atlantic to the Pacific by way of the Straits of Magellan, or on the open route around Cape Horn.

To Britain, the Falklands have proven naval value. It was from their hidden harbors that a British fleet, which was re-coaling, rushed out to meet and defeat a German fleet in December, 1914. This event marked the end of a definite phase of World War I at sea.

In these days of increasing interest in the South Polar region, the islands have another value. They are on the route from England to the South Pole by way of the British-owned South Shetlands and South Orkneys. The latter group is a final take-off station to explore the Antarctic. The Falklands are a way station.

The Falklands, over the ownership of which England and Argentina are now in dispute, are as far south of the

equator as the British Isles are north. Together with the Shetlands and other islands in that neighborhood, they are Britain's most southerly possessions. The United Kingdom's claim is based on discovery (in 1592), settlement, ownership for many years, and because of its Scottish population. Argentina's claim is based largely on proximity and need.

There are over 100 islands in the group but only two, East Falkland and West Falkland, are large enough to have value. These contain about 3,000 and 2,300 square miles of area, respectively. Their total population is in the neighborhood of 3,000 persons. The principal town is Stanley, on the landlocked harbor within Port Williams, on the east coast of East Falkland.

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INVENTION

New Tank Truck Feature

► TO OBVIATE dragging filling hoses to the tops of the huge tank trucks now in use, J. H. DeFrees of Warren, Pa., has filling connections in the bottom of the one on which he has been granted patent 2,423,879. Within, an inverted U-shaped pipe carries the gasoline or other liquid up, then down near the bottom again for discharge. Patent rights are assigned to the Pennsylvania Furnace and Iron Company.

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