St. Kitts, Jan. 21st.—U. S. S. cruiser San Francisco, torpedoboat Tahan and tug Lark arrived 20th. Tug Mallard arrived 21st.

"What's the Matter With the World?"

After Analyzing Various Phases of Existing Business and Financial Conditions, a Clear Thinker and Incisive Writer Offers a Simple Answer

(Continued from yesterday's Avis.)

When our rich farm lands climb up to $200 to $400 per acre, some people thought that just so much wealth was added to the country. As a matter of fact, nothing of the kind happened. The land at $400 per acre in 1920 is the same land as it was at $175 in 1913, with this one difference: that is, the mortgages which went along with the transfer of deeds. The thing that caused the jump was the dressed hogs and cattle, and the wheat traveling from America to Europe, because the people over there, ordinarily growing and entertaining their own porkers, were busy fighting and killing their own kind. Now that the fighting is over, having spent even their credit in fireworks, the people must deny themselves the company of the American porker. The cause of the land value elevation having been removed, the inevitable is happening: the settling of land values. But what became of the $200 per acre or the $75 per acre, of which the woefully swollen mortgages are witnesses? Well, of course, the vast majority of farms did not change hands. In such instances all the "land advance" was pure sunshine, except as a basis for increased taxation to soothe war debts' hurts. Where they did change hands the only buttons made went to the professional farm land traders in their offices, who merely played one sucker against another for a 'commission." For the "buttons" these "hard-working" speculators gave to the new owner a deed, which the new owner may keep until his notes come due. To the former owner the accommodating go-between gave some money, and a mortgage on his former farm. For this mortgage the holder will get more or less money, depending on how long he lives, how much good luck the new owner has; or, in case of ill luck, on how much the land will bring at a forced sale, some time in the future.

Much the same thing is true as to live stock. The writer attended a dairy cattle auction in October of this year. He saw one cow, for which as a heifer he saw the owner pay $460 in 1917, sell for $123. If ever a cow was worth $460 that one was. Another bought the same year for $2,500 sold for $365. She probably brought all she was ever worth. A third cow "one of the greatest of the breed," for which the owner paid $4,200 sold for $610. In less than six months she had milked 13,000 pounds of milk, under farm conditions. She was still milking nearly 70 pounds per day. There had been some buttons round that circle. They had been divided up, much as in the case of Mr. Elephant Pig and his wife, when they "attended" the auction. Mr. Smooth Fieldman, Mr. Shrewd Trader, Mr. Selling Colonel, and Mr. Sales Manager each got as much as he could get. The land and live stock sharks divide "honors" only with the stock gamblers and promoters. The amount of new stocks printed at the order of "boards of directors" and given away with "bonds," or sold at from 5 cents to $100 plus per share is amazing. It amounts in the aggregate for the United States alone in six years to more than the national debt. It is a safe guess that the real money value of the whole huge pile of paper stocks is not much above 5 percent on the "face" value.

The Ponzi flurry in Boston was not the only one. There was a "Silvers" flurry also; one day "snares" sold for 29 cents; three days later for $8.50. I have seen them quoted since at 3 cents. There was a "silver fox" farm corporation, with foxes valued at $5,000 each. Actually "educated" men bought "silver fox" stock. Oklahoma, according to a well-authenticated report, had a "rat and cat farm corporation." It was a perpetual motion idea. The rats live in the ground; cats ate the rats; after the cats were skinned the rats ate the cats. Real-for-sure Americans bought "stock," Who got the buttons in all these games? Ask the promoters and stock brokers and gamblers. Who furnished the cash? I hate to admit it, but some ten years ago I myself furnished $800 of it, for a "California" silver." I am happy to say that, so far as I know, even the promoters of that game today hold no more of the "button" than I do.

What our old world has got to learn is this: the world, including America, is no richer in November, 1920, than it was in November, 1913. On the contrary, it is fully $150,000,000,000 poorer. People by the tens of thousands thought that they were immensely richer. So convinced were they that they bought things on the strength of the hope of future earnings. Automobiles, for example, of which only 25 percent were cash sales. Corporations issued "stock dividends"; millions thought that two pieces of paper representing one and the same thing made the one thing twice as valuable. As a matter of fact, it did nothing of the kind. If it did anything it merely cheapened the original thing. Such is the real meaning of the slump in stocks today. Some few who took cash for their sales, and then stayed out of the game, still hold the "button." The great majority never had anything but paper; they may have that yet. But they will learn within two years, if they do not already suspect the truth, that paper is not money. Buttons? "There ain't any."

A practical farmer who has handled Jersey cows making and selling butter has a good barn, butter machinery, and three or four good cows. This fall he had an amazing lot of feed, and a hired man with not much work in sight for the winter. Another farmer about to move to California was advertising a choice, small herd of registered cows and heifers. The first man looked them over, two weeks before the sale. His judgement was: "Here are not fewer than ten cows good for 400 pounds of butter, all due to calve within six weeks. I can offer my man a 50 percent increase in wages and a heifer two years old for each year, in addition, if he will do the work for five to seven years. Of course, it is close, hard work, but in those seven years he can do me good, and lay the foundation for a home of his own."

He made the offer. Answer: "I will not tie myself down so, for any wage or opportunity."

I suspect that "buttons" are scarce. I mean real money. Paper imitations are plentiful. Furthermore, I suspect that all who want the real thing, for their own future comfort, and the security of their families, must "tie themselves down" to a real job for at least five years to come, and as much longer as the desire is great for a bigger button.

Sitting in moving picture houses several afternoons per week or driving gas wagons along country roads; may be entrancing. Neither will get a button of any considerable size, even if any at all. Here and there one man may steal something from his fellows. Even so, he is not to be envied. The man who will tie himself down to a real job has little to fear for the future. The man who will not has little to hope for. ARTHUR BARBER, Essex Co., Mass.