was aided by his reputation. He organized a fifty thousand dollar corporation and went down to West Virginia with a group of stockholders. There they bought a little mine near Ajax on the Norfolk and Western Railroad, and tested the coöperative principle for the first time. The principle was found good enough, but not the property. So they sold it and crossed the Tug River into Kentucky.

Himler's following grew now to the impressive number of 1,400. The capital was increased to $500,000; and the Himler Coal Company, incorporated under the laws of West Virginia, leased a property of 3,000 acres near Warfield, in Martin County, opposite Kermit, West Virginia, which was the railroad terminal.

There was plenty of coal on the property; nevertheless the investment looked, in the beginning, very much like a white elephant. The Hungarian pioneers had to do everything from the bottom up. They had to install machinery, bore the shaft and construct the slope; they had to build houses for themselves, to put in a water system. And the nearest railroad station, Kermit, was two miles away. Not very far, by Interborough Rapid Transit standards. But in those two miles between Kermit and Himlerville, as the Hungarians called their new settlement, lay the unbridged Tug River, and a long stretch of Kentucky mud. Pieces of machinery weighing between ten and twenty tons had to be carried across the river on floats, dragged by horses across the trackless mire. Thousands of tons of concrete had to be hauled in the same way. In early spring, with ice drifting down the river, and the roads, such as they were, transformed into a muddy sea by the melting snow, it took six weeks for an exceptionally heavy piece to cover that distance of two miles.

The colonists saw that their problem was above everything else one of communications; that their investment was worthless unless Martin County was connected with the outside world. What was needed was a steel and concrete bridge across the Tug River, which would secure an extension of the Norfolk and Western Railroad into Martin County.

It was estimated that the bridge would cost $150,000 and could be completed within ten months. Coal land owners of Martin County underwrote most of the amount; the Hungarian coöperatives subscribed $20,000. Four months passed. The mine of the Himler Company was opened in the meantime. Then the engineers discovered a bed of quicksand eighteen feet below the bottom of the river. Only by boring to a depth of from thirty to forty feet could they reach the rock. Estimates rose to $200,000; the cooperatives accordingly raised their subscription to $45,000. Further physical difficulties developed. The majority stockholders of the Kermit-Warfield Bridge Company, the corporation organized by the coal land owners, declared they could not increase their contribution, and asked Himler to advance cash. Himler met the contingency by borrowing $125,000 on twelve-year bonds mortgaged on the bridge. But it soon appeared that another $100,000 was needed, and the majority stockholders wanted Himler to raise it. Himler now saw that they meant to use the coöperatives as a catspaw, and declared that he would not put up another penny unless he was given full control of the bridge. The majority stockholders refused, knowing well that control of the bridge meant control of the 40,000 acres of Martin County coal and timber lands. Himler stood his ground. Work on the bridge stopped. The land owners surrendered. Himler bought their interest outright, and resumed construction. The coöperatives now were absolute owners of the key to the future of the whole region.

It took $300,000 and twenty-two months to complete the bridge, instead of the $150,000 and ten months of the original estimates. Every penny of the amount represented the investment of the Hungarian coöperatives. But completed it was in 1921.

* * *

May 21, 1921, was a great day in the history of Martin County. Under an eight-column front page streamer reading Vast Coal and Timber Land Opened, the Huntington (West Virginia) Herald-Dispatch described the event with typical American dash:

"The gates of Martin County, Kentucky, locked for countless ages, were thrown wide today, when a train of two coaches, gaily bedecked and crowded with men, women and children in holiday dress entered. The special train with Daniel Elmer Hewit, Huntington lumber baron, at the throttle, and Martin Himler wielding the fireman's shovel, made history for eastern Kentucky. It was the first standard gauge train to roll upon Martin County soil.

"Thousands of acres of untouched coal and timber lands lie within the gates which were unlocked for the first time today, awaiting the magic touch of capital harnessed to industry.... Behind the remarkable development of the huge project involving construction of a great steal bridge and a railroad by private capital, lies an notable story of individual vision.... A guiding genuis in the tremendous enterprise is Martin Himler, a native of Hungary, but long a naturalized American citizen, who has organized the first workable coöperative coal mining company in America, if not in the world.... The announcement made by Himler that the bridge would never be used for selfish purposes, but, together with the railroad, would be devoted to the public use for the development of the tremendous resources of Martin County, was held the most important development of the day's celebration....

"Today's celebration was unique in many particulars. The two-car train, decked with garlands and flags and laden with holiday crowds, leaves the little settlement of Kermit (on the West Virginia side) amid cheers of such multitudes as are able to gather on the slopes.... A great bridge is approached. It is THE bridge, the only bridge in the world as far as Kermit and Martin County folk care.... It is the gateway of the hopes of thousands of people....

"The train enters the famous village of Warfield, Kentucky, and runs on to Himlerville. The engine whistle shrieks, and the sirens of the great power house wail a welcome. There are cheers and happy smiles. The train halts, and the crowds pile off. Frank Demjen, Hungarian, plays Old Kentucky Home on a cornet, solus. It is the big moment...."

The "great power house" marked an achievement very similar in its evolution to that of the bridge itself. While the difficulties of bridge construction were at their height, Himler opened negotiations with the local power company for a supply of electricity. The company is controlled by resident coal operators of the district and they were naturally not over-anxious to help out their new competitor. Still terms were proffered. The company demanded from Himler an advance of $60,000 to improve its equipment. Himler agreed to pay it, but stipulated that the contract had to be filled within a certain length of time. Weeks passed, and he was informed that arrangements could not be completed by the date set. Himler at once broke off negotiations and proceeded to erect his own power plant. He had no cash—the bridge absorbed every penny. An associate suggested the construction of a small power house at a cost of $20,000.

"I am not building for the present, but for the future," was his chracteristic answer. A small plant would become inadequate within two or three years. Money was dug up and a power plant, with every piece of machinery in duplicate for emergencies, was erected at an expense of $150,000.

Up to July 1921 the capital of the concern represented 5,000 shares of $100 each, held by 1,500 individual stockholders. Himler himself holds but 2 or 3 per cent of the shares; the rest is held by miners in such small lots that no less than 450 individual holders of the largest lots are necessary to form a majority of 51 per cent. A board of eleven directors is elected by the yearly convention. With the exception of Himler, president, general manager and mine superintendent, and Eugene Lang, a young Hungarian business man working for a salary, who is secretary and treasurer, the directors are all common miners. The net receipts are divided in three equal parts. One part is issued as a dividend on the 5,000 shares. The second part is paid out as a bonus to the miners who are actually employed at Himlerville. At present they number 120—mostly stockholders, naturally, and from five to ten newcomers are added weekly from a long waiting list of stockholders. The bonus is issued in equal portions regardless of the number of shares held by individuals. The third part is joined to the reserve capital.

When the convention of the coöperatives met in July, 1921, at Himlerville, and Himler rendered account of his stewardship, the 600 delegates representing 2,975 votes unanimously raised the capital of $500,000 to $2,000,000, and decided on the opening of two new mines, in addition to the one then in operation.

In addition to the 3,000 acres originally leased options are held by the coöpera-