

## The Grub and the Price

(Concluded from page 4.)

deans couldn't interpret the writing on Belshazzar's wall, and they were wise men in their day. Famine sounds possible enough for India, China, or any far-off place, and just about right for Germany. But for America—quit your kidding!

Quite so. Exactly. Atlantis was high and dry once; there used to be good deep-sea fishing in Saskatchewan and the Arizona Desert; Siberia was noted for its tropical growths.

Bear one thing in mind: The luck

of neither man nor country lasts forever. No man is immune from accident and sickness; no man may say confidently that he will be doing business as usual a year from to-day. No land is so favoured that it will produce in abundance invariably. There is no earthly or heavenly guarantee of an average crop on any continent in any year. Most men carry insurance. Our food insurance heretofore has been in the average crop production of the world. But now, even with a

good American crop, the production of the world is below the average. Where can we now insure against a crop failure? Nowhere. We have to insure ourselves. Moreover, we have to insure the people of Britain and France. And so the very least we can do is to cut out waste in food, which includes unnecessary consumption.

I have said that there are many homes where no more economies can be effected without privation, where high prices have already eliminated waste. Nothing makes people, who, doing their best, have a hard time to make both ends meet, more tired and

hostile than to have economy preached at them; especially when it is preached by comfortably-upholstered gentlemen who ride in expensive cars.

For instance, a certain great man, not a Canadian, but a big gun in Canadian affairs and war organization and war effort, came West a year ago. He had a special train, which bore his own conveyances for him to ride in when he descended from it. His train stopped along at little towns in scenic parts of the mountains, whose inhabitants had been adjured to "give till it hurt," and were doing so. Some of the said inhabitants told me that the booze on the table of the great man's diner cost more than their whole town could scare up for war funds in a year. Sore? Of course they were sore. Their comments were scathing and bitter. Naturally they refused to believe one word of slushy press reports of the simplicity of that great man's war-time household.

Now, in all probability this great man was a well-meaning old sport, who had been used to throwing on a good deal of dog and throwing down a good many drinks all his life; and it never occurred to him that he was offending the sensibilities of anybody.

But on the same principle exhortations to war-time economies are offensive to many whose purchasing power has been cut down thirty or forty per cent. They hear such exhortations with about the calm, mental poise with which a man beneath a stalled car receives suggestions. That is an important thing for well-meaning people to get through their heads. They might just as well tell Dives in torment to go light on ice water as to tell some to economize nowadays. A campaign for voluntary thrift should be carefully directed at those whose thrift is not already enforced. An exercise of his power by the Food Controller in the direction of a general and material reduction of food prices would make for a better and happier national frame of mind, and thus for a better voluntary response. Further, such an exercise of his powers is expected. As it is, he seems to be starting well. He cannot do everything at once. It is a new job.

On the whole, when he takes time to use it, the average man's head is pretty level. He has a good deal to occupy it these days, in his ordinary affairs, without bothering about public matters if they would only let him alone. But as they won't he has come to one or two definite conclusions, which I think may be fairly stated in this way:

1. Whether or not there is an actual shortage of food there is the possibility of one, having regard for the fact that it is absolutely necessary to feed our allies as well as ourselves, which involves making good submarine losses. Therefore food economy is as essential as food production, and regulations to that end will be cheerfully obeyed, especially if the plain truth is hammered into us. The method of food economy is up to the Food Controller and is part of his job.

2. Prices have been forced by speculation, greed and panicky emulation to a point in many cases greatly in excess of legitimate profits. Nobody has any business to make excessive profits now from food or anything else. Therefore fair prices should be ascertained by the Food Controller and fixed by him.

3. P. D. Q.



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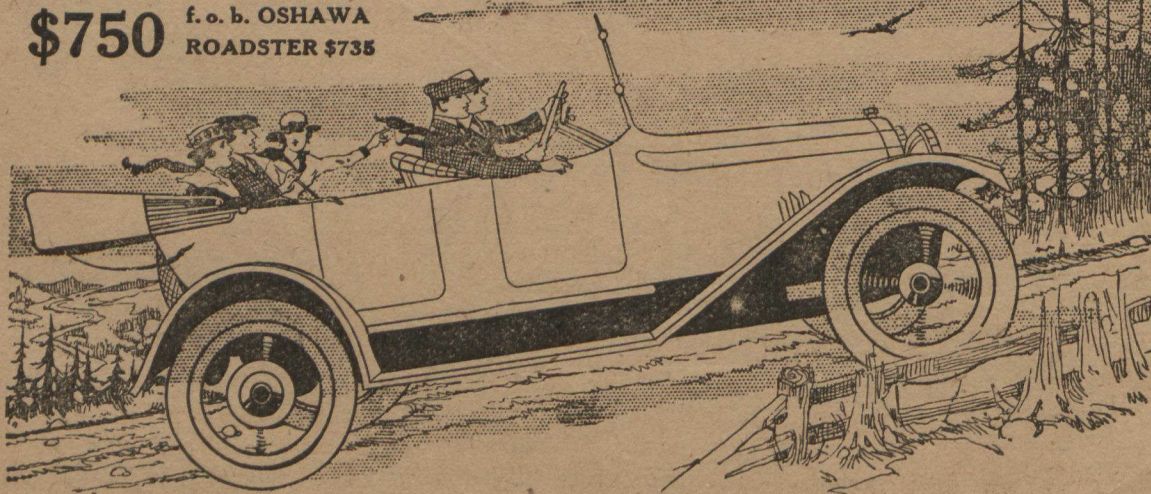
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