

The Premature Pacifist

By J. W. MACMILLAN, Manitoba College.

In the early days in the west, in a little valley in the Sierras, at the forks of a tiny mountain stream, there grew up a small settlement of people. Some of them washed the sandbars of the stream for gold, some of them pastured a few cattle or sheep on the ranges, some of them were employed in a sawmill which cut the logs floated down from the forests higher up, and some of them kept shops, stores and saloons, selling to their neighbors and travellers. In these days there was no town organization, and the law of the country had not yet stretched out its strong arm to them. Only the goodwill and common sense of the people protected their property and lives.

After a time there came to that mountain village a man named William Frederick. It had not been the custom of the people to inquire into any newcomer's antecedents, but to take him at his face value. There was no mistaking, however, the type to which Frederick belonged. He was what was known as a "bad man," a coarse, brutal, fearless, arrogant, domineering ruffian, ready to risk his own or take another's life on any provocation. With his advent a feeling of disturbance and alarm ran through the whole community. Men began to oil the locks of their rifles and buy more cartridges. Some, who had revolvers, took them from their trunks, loaded them and put them in their pockets.

But the bad man did not begin by shooting up the town. Except for an air of recklessness and bravado he seemed like his neighbors. He was ready to talk to anyone, and made himself quite popular with many of the poorer workers by his condemnation of the leading men of the place. According to him they were monsters of greed and hypocrisy. He was specially severe on those who frowned on gambling and drinking, calling them sanctimonious humbugs. He was an impassioned advocate of a wide-open town, in the interests of man liberty and enjoyment and for the increase of trade.

So most of the citizens began to lay aside their fears. They felt that this man was not the ignorant impulsive savage that other bad men of their acquaintance had been. They recognized in him force of character, with mental energy and ability. Many of them became influenced by his opinions, the more so as he was manifestly becoming rich. Several new business blocks, the handsomest in the town, were built by him. He had built himself a home, the most imposing and elaborate in the town, for which he demanded a goodly rate of interest.

The more sagacious few, however, became only more uneasy as they saw so many of their old-time friends drawing away from them and becoming the partisans of Frederick. And the village changed its character. It became vociferous and violent. Saloons multiplied and ran all night long. Gambling halls, fitted with expensive appliances and luxurious furnishings, ran every day and night in the week. Low dance halls started up, and other resorts of a more vicious sort. Painted women outstared decent women on the public street. Claims were jumped. Highway robbery became common. Shots were often heard in the night, and occasionally some one disappeared never to be heard of again. It came to be recognized as distinctly dangerous to ask questions in regard to such mysterious disappearances. Some who were indiscreet enough to question or criticize the new era of vice and terror had their cattle stolen or their homes burnt over their heads.

The climax came when a poor family named Albert provoked the wrath of Frederick. A more inoffensive man than Albert was not to be found in the village. For no other reason than that he refused to join in one of the unholy depredations of the organized gang of thieves and murderers headed by Frederick his house was set upon in the dead of night by a mob, many of whom were drunk. The house was burnt to the ground, one or two of his children were killed, several of his daughters were outraged, and Frederick took possession of poor Albert's farm, compelling him to work it and hand over the proceeds to him.

The next night a vigilance committee was formed, and a set of articles drawn up which a number of men signed, declaring that they would not rest till Albert had had his property restored to him

and the village was freed from the terror of Frederick and his band. These articles were nailed on the front of the most prominent building of the place.

So the village became divided into two armed camps. Everybody was forced into the fight, on one side or another. No one could show himself on the street without being shot at. Entrenchments were dug and forts constructed from which assaults were delivered or repelled. All peaceful production ceased, the whole energy of the people going into the fight, and both sides grew rapidly poorer as they consumed their supplies and failed to replenish them.

At first the advantage was with the ruffians. They had more firearms and ammunition, and were more expert in handling them. But for a long time neither side gained any important victory. The vigilance committee, however, managed to set guards on the roads into the village so that while they could get supplies from outside their enemies could not. And after a time also they acquired an equipment of arms and ammunition which made them stronger than the foe.

It was at this time, when Frederick was growing desperate, realizing that he could not escape defeat, that there came to the village a young lady to teach school. She was pretty and good, and had the fearlessness of innocence. The sight of dead bodies in the streets horrified her, and she resolved to risk her life in order to bring the dreadful contest to a close.

So she boldly visited Frederick and besought him to agree to cease fighting. He answered her:

"My dear young lady, it is the dearest wish of my heart. I forebore to fight as long as I could, and have done nothing but resist the wanton at-

tacks of these enemies, to whose greed and hypocrisy I had become an obstacle. If you can persuade them to quit I shall be very glad, because I am a man who loves peace. As you can see, I have so far more than held my own against them, but rather than see more bloodshed I will submit the differences between us to arbitration and abide by the decision."

Then the school teacher went to see the vigilance committee. They told her the story of how they had come to organize themselves and of their purpose to continue fighting till their village was once again fit to live in. And she argued with them, saying:

"I will not try to justify your enemy, nor to deny the great provocation under which you began the fight. But think of the destruction that is taking place now! You are all impoverished. Many of your sons and some of your daughters are already slain! Do you want to go on? Is not even a bad peace better than war? And I am sure that your enemy to-day is a different man from what you think him to be. Perhaps your object is already accomplished, and he is a chastened and meeker spirit. I am sure that, once the fighting is over, you will find him a good citizen of your town."

So these honest men of the vigilance committee allowed themselves to be persuaded by the pretty and innocent school-teacher. And peace was declared. And Frederick laughed in his sleeve, and sent out and got a hundred more ruffians, and six machine-guns, and two wagon-loads of incendiary bombs. And one night, several months later the gang made a sudden attack on the homes of the vigilance committee, and burnt them to the ground, and shot the inmates as they tried to escape. And afterward they ruled the town at their pleasure. And men were robbed or slain, and women sold into a slavery of shame without anyone to protest.

And the pretty school-teacher, what became of her? Oh, Frederick came to the school one day and gruffly told her to shut it up. She has since been washing dishes in his kitchen.

Prices that Led to Food Control in England

By HAROLD A. LITTLEDALE, in the New York Evening Post.

So steadily has the cost of living increased in England since the war began that the appointment of a Food Controller was inevitable. That appointment was indicated in a recent report of the British Board of Trade, which not only showed that in September last food prices had increased 65 per cent. since the beginning of hostilities, but that the increase had been continuous, and that, as the end of the war was not in sight, the extreme of prices had not been reached.

Just now England is so cheered with the accomplishments of her armies that she is willing to look light-heartedly upon even so serious a problem as the high cost of living. Witness the following lines, which are on every tongue:

Mary had a little lamb,
And very little, too;
With lamb at one and six a pound
What else could Mary do?

One has to eat, but eating in England in wartime, while not quite such a problem as it is in the Central Empires, is a problem none the less. That does not mean that the country is not prosperous. Never was there less unemployment. Never were wages so high. But wages have not risen proportionately with the cost of food. For the army wages have not risen at all, and a great many, in these days of conscription, are wholly dependent on the widow's mite that the army grandiloquently describes as a separation allowance.

The fact that the cost of living on September 1st last was 65 per cent. greater than the cost of living in July, 1914, the month preceding the war, means that what cost the housewife £1 before the war costs her £1 13s. now. Just how this strikes home will be seen in the following comparative table of prices prevailing in a typical provincial town:

| | Before war. | Now. |
|----------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Bread | \$0.09 | \$0.18 |
| Butter (per pound) | .26 | .46 |
| Sugar (granulated, 2-lbs.) | .09 | .25 |
| Coal (red ash, per ton) | 4.50 | 5.50 |
| Matches (dozen boxes) | .04 | .15 |

| | | |
|------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Meat (beef, lamb, etc., lb.) | 18@.20 | .26 |
| Bacon (per lb.) | 20@.25 | 38@.42 |
| Chicken (per lb.) | .20 | .38 |
| Kippers (pair) | .04 | .08 |
| Cheese (per lb.) | .14 | 22@.25 |
| Currants (per lb.) | .08 | .14 |
| Milk (per qt.) | .06 | .10 |
| Jam (per lb.) | .11 | .17 |
| Eggs, summer, 1915 | 14 for .25 | 10 for .25 |
| Eggs, winter, 1915 | 6 for .25 | 3 for .25 |

On September 30th last, the Board of Trade committee investigating food prices made an interim report as to meat, milk, and bacon in which the following table showing a percentage comparison of the level of prices obtaining on September 1, 1916, as compared with the prices prevailing in July, 1914:

| | Percentage increase— | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| | Large towns pop. over 50,000. | Small towns & villages. | United Kingdom. |
| Beef, British— | | | |
| Ribs | 61 | 59 | 60 |
| Thin flank | 87 | 72 | 80 |
| Chilled or frozen— | | | |
| Ribs | 83 | 76 | 80 |
| Thin flank | 102 | 92 | 97 |
| Mutton, British— | | | |
| Legs | 57 | 54 | 55 |
| Breast | 92 | 68 | 80 |
| Mutton, frozen— | | | |
| Legs | 89 | 80 | 84 |
| Breast | 123 | 111 | 117 |
| Bacon, streaky | 49 | 42 | 46 |
| Fish | 103 | 70 | 87 |
| Flour (household) | 59 | 65 | 62 |
| Bread | 58 | 50 | 54 |
| Tea | 51 | 50 | 50 |
| Sugar (granulated) | 166 | 160 | 163 |
| Milk | 39 | 32 | 35 |
| Butter, fresh | 48 | 49 | 48 |
| Butter, salt | 47 | 49 | 48 |

(Concluded on page 16).