

Observations by a Winnipeg Major in Old London

A Quiet Revolution

On February 25th, ten million people in London and the adjacent counties participated in one of the greatest "revolutions" that has ever taken place in England—a quiet and entirely peaceful revolution of the habits of generations. London on that day was placed on rations. It is astonishing how smoothly everything has gone, and how cheerfully everyone has accepted the new regulations. There will be some hardship and a considerable amount of unavoidable inconvenience, but the great majority are glad that a necessary step has now been taken, and are more than ready to do their share to make the Food Controller's scheme a real success.

To the housekeeper there is relief. Relief from the perpetual nightmare of hunting meat supplies—relief from the interminable queues. She may have little meat to give the family, but that little is assured. By careful manipulation there will be no very serious scarcity of meat on the family table, and many nutritious substitutes are still quite plentiful.

To the man of the household, who is away from home all day, it is simply a matter of discarding meat at his mid-day meal—and nearly every married man is doing so, thus saving his ration for the family pot. The city restaurants are discarding meat dishes wholesale, and the quiet revolution will be nowhere more apparent than in the menus of many an old-established caterer, famed all over the world for the generous dishes of days gone by.

The care-free bachelor is not quite so care-free nowadays. He must carry his meat card wherever he goes—or his meal is meatless. He must content himself with very minute portions of meat at that, and the proprietors of eating houses seem strangely opposed to the popular view that potatoes are cheap and plentiful. In the restaurants they are dear, often ill-cooked, and served in none too generous measure. The chance customer can still secure a little butter, if he is lucky, without his butter card, but he can have no sugar unless he brings it with him. So he brings it, or uses saccharine.

There will be further stages of this quiet revolution yet. But the first step has been taken, and taken successfully. Britishers are not yet experts in the gentle art of tightening the belt, but they can master this as well as any other exercise.

With one arrangement of the Food Controller everyone is satisfied, and that is the regulation that soldiers and sailors on leave shall have substantial rations, something like three times as much meat as the civilian portion. That is as it should be—"fighting men first" is the wholesome rule.

Many are the changes these new food rules bring to conservative old England. For one thing, every man, woman, and child who can by hook or crook find a piece of vacant ground and a spade is digging for dear life. Garden produce may be used by the person who grows it, and many a household is determined this year to be independent of the potato dealer at any rate. And folks are learning how very excellent are many articles of food they have hitherto neglected. They are learning to cook vegetables as they should be cooked, and are finding out why a Scotchman swears by porridge. They are realizing what a mighty good thing it is that Canada and the United States are just across the ocean—for practically all sea-borne supplies are coming from there. They are filled with grateful amazement when they learn that the bulk of the meat and bacon and much of the wheat coming into the country during the last few weeks has been taken from the very plates of North Americans—the sheer result of self-denial. They have reason to realize something of the difficulties winter with its blizzards and snowstorms brings to the railroads of America, hindering the shipment of so many needed supplies. And the nation has never in its history before, that I think must again become a land of plenty, or its economic safety can be secured.

Many changes are everywhere apparent. There is less visiting nowadays, or, if friends visit, they take their own food with them. Ladies, and even some men, carry small cases, with divisions for sugar and butter and biscuits. That aged institution, the railway-buffet sandwich, has died of old age. It was never worth the money—it is certainly not worth a precious meat ticket.

Food kitchens are springing up everywhere, and in them, no doubt, will eventually be found a sound solution of rationing problems. The English do not take easily to new ideas, especially in matters that affect the home—the Englishman's castle. But these communal kitchens are coming, and coming to stay. It is even proposed to establish one in that sanctuary of conservatism, the Inns of Court, those ancient chambers of the law.

And the Englishman is finding, as his colonial cousins have found long ago, that he can do without one old-established function, the late supper. Many a weary housewife silently blesses its banishment, and hopes never to see it return.

Many blessings come in camouflage, and not the least of the compensation for shorter commons is the remarkable health of the nation. Folks walk instead of ride, they eat lightly and sleep well. They have other things to think of than their petty ills, and they are in abounding health. And health means cheeriness—never more needed than in these difficult days.

A Bolt From the Blue

He was standing in front of the hotel, smoking a long, fat cigar, with a gold sash about his corpulent waist. The creases in his trousers were new and pronounced, his shoes were freshly laced, and all about him proclaimed a man who had finished his work for the day, eaten a good dinner, and was now in the frame of mind to regard the world as a good place to play in.

A rather shabby-looking young fellow, with a stubby beard and a hat that may have cost ninety-five cents several seasons ago, glanced at the comfortable-looking man, passed on a step or two, hesitated, and went back.

"I beg your pardon, mister," he began, "but—"

"Ah!" the other interrupted. "What is it this time? I suppose you would like to have a little assistance toward buying a ticket to the course of lectures on 'Creeds that have moved the World,' in order—"

"No, excuse me, mister—"

"No? Then it must be that you want the price of admission to the address before the Mycological Center, on the 'Edible Mushrooms of the Middle West,' so that when you order mushrooms—"

"Say, mister—"

"What, wrong again? You don't mean to tell me that you have just buried your father and mother, and that your youngest child is—"

"No, I just wanted—"

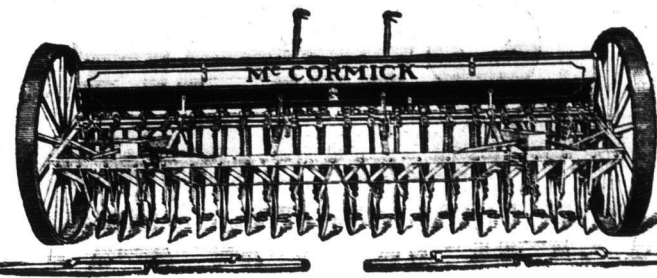
"Oh, now I have it! You have walked all the way from Pittsburg to get a job at—"

"You needn't think—"

"I don't—after office hours. I can't afford to. But is it possible that I am mistaken again? It cannot be that you want a nickel to buy a drink? That you would accept anything so sordid as money?"

The young fellow had his chance at last. With a grim glint in his eye he took it. "I don't want anything," he said, "only if I could make chin-music as fast and easy as you do, I'd have my clothes made to order by a good tailor. There's a tag on the back of your coat that says '40, stout. Price: \$15.' I thought 'mebbe you didn't know it.'"

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A Message For Every Home

Is to be found in the Splendid Picture The Dispatch Rider

By Malcolm D. Charleson

The Dispatch Rider is one of the finest water color art productions of the year 1917. It depicts a trooper of the 34th Fort Garry Horse Regiment in France. It is from the brush of Mr. M. D. Charleson, a well-known western Canadian artist, and was produced by him while a member of the famous Fort Garry Horse. Many months ago Mr. Charleson was commissioned by the management of The Manitoba Free Press Company, Limited, to create a watercolor that would make a suitable premium for the subscribers of The Free Press Prairie Farmer. Western Home Monthly readers, by taking advantage of this special offer, can also secure a copy of this picture.

The writer of this announcement cannot hope to picture in cold type the expression on "The Dispatch Rider's" face as he dashes along the old Roman road, with a century-old village just behind in the fierce grip of the red flames of war. There is something about the peaceful valley and the exploding shrapnel that is inexplicable, and both the horse and rider glaringly convey the absolute necessity and the urgency of the situation existing in the background. The Free Press Prairie Farmer has had this watercolor painting reproduced in eight delicate colors on photochrome paper by the best lithographer in Western Canada. The size of the picture itself is 13 inches by 18 inches, and including the mount is 21 by 28 inches.

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