

I suppose there are good reasons why the things that came into town for use and consumption by the townspeople and farmers have not advanced in price proportionately as much as the things that were hauled in by the farmers. The economic system has changed, as well as the means of transportation and the facilities for shipment abroad. In those days a few farmers sold milk to the cheese factories, but the exchange for it, either in cheese or cash or whey, but mostly in all three, was just enough to be an aggravation. Creameries such as operate to-day all over the country were unknown, and their splendid products were yet to bless a later generation. And while butter was common barter, there was no standard of quality. All went at one price, for no storekeeper could give Mrs. Jones fifteen cents in trade for butter, and Mrs. Brown only fourteen cents, and go on keeping store. Whether Mrs. Brown's butter was the best or the worst, she received fifteen cents for it in barter, just the same as all the others. The theory was, literally, that all butter is born equal, which is the same as to say that all customers must be treated as if equal. Here, then, in a crude sense, was the equality factor in Socialism put into practice. But it was a practice that could not last, for while it prevails to a very slight extent in some places, even to-day, it is not the basis of trade in our towns as it used to be.

I have remarked that the butter was not all of standard quality. Some of it was not as good as it looked. I recall one woman who used all her own butter on her own table. But one unfortunate day she discovered a dead mouse in the crock of cream. Not daunted, however, she did the usual churning and produced a fine-looking roll of butter. But she couldn't eat it herself. She knew the butter was really all right and would taste good to anyone who did not know about the mouse. So she took it to the storekeeper, told him the truth, and asked whether he would exchange it for a roll from his cellar.

"You know," she said, making a slight misquotation, "for what the mind doesn't know the heart won't grieve for."

"Oh, that's all right," said the obliging storekeeper, "I'm pleased to accommodate you."

He disappeared into the cellar and a moment later reappeared with a roll of butter that you scarcely could tell from the one he had taken down.

*All Butter
Born Equal*

*A Mouse in
the Cream*