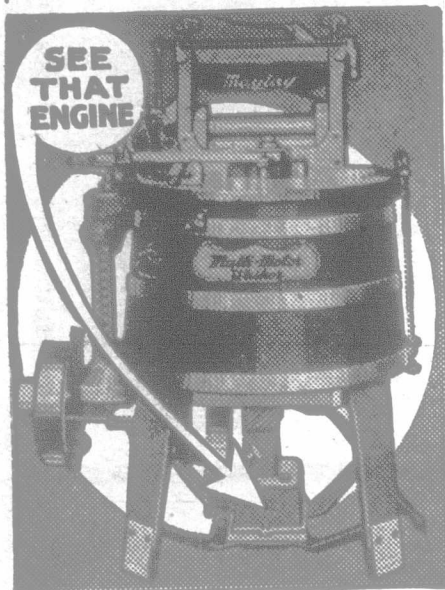


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The 16th of July, as I write, and the sun shining! People are exclaiming over that as though it were a novelty, as, indeed, it is to some extent, for one could count on one's fingers all the really bright days we have had since spring.

Somewhere the poet Lowell speaks of:

"A dull and drizzling day,
That makes us bitter at our neighbor's sins".

I rather suspect that when he wrote the lines there was a twinkle in his eye—that he was enjoying to the full his sly poke at human "wobbliness" of temper,—but at the same time it must be acknowledged that there must be some touch of truth in the observation else it would lack the element that makes it humorous. There really are some people who are influenced to such an extent by weepy weather that when the sun refuses to shine they are out of tune with all creation and ready to take the head off everyone in sight. What a time these people must have had this season! What a chance for the condition to become chronic! And the worst of it is that yesterday was St. Swithin's day—and it rained, an occurrence that is said to presage more or less rain every day for the next forty days. It will be interesting to watch whether it falls so this year.

Do you know the story of St. Swithin? He was the bishop of Winchester and patron saint of Winchester Cathedral in the good old days of England, and was for some time tutor to the sons of King Egbert. He was famed as a man of great piety, and so great was his humility that he made his diocesan journeys always on foot. Whenever he gave a banquet, too, it was the poor and not the rich whom he invited. When he died, in July 862, he gave orders that he was not to be buried within the church, but outside in "a vile and unworthy place." A hundred years later when an attempt was made to move his body from this place to a new basilica, there came a tremendous downpour of rain, and legend grew about the occurrence extending the time to forty days. Hence the doggerel:

"St. Swithin's day if thou dost rain
For forty days it will remain;
St. Swithin's day if thou be fair
For forty days 'twill rain na mair".

Yes, yesterday was St. Swithin's day, but to-day the sky is blue, so we may hope that the old saint has forgotten the time-honored custom. A year ago the country was parched with heat, and the wheat was shrivelling up in its sheaths for want of moisture; if the skies are clear for a time this year may be the better of the two. Certainly the grain is not suffering for food, and the only real complaints come from some of the flat lands where the hay is said to be rotting and the crops have been drowned out by lying water.

In the meantime, as the harvest days draw near, we wait almost breathlessly, for this year it is so necessary that the foodstuffs of the world receive no check. Only one good could possibly come from a shortage this season—the likelihood that if the world were on the edge of famine the death blow would have to be given to the wastage of good grain in the manufacture of alcoholic drink. That has not been done yet to any sweeping extent in Great Britain, nor in some parts of Canada, and, while the United States seems on the verge of passing a prohibitory law in regard to most liquors, an exception of beer is likely to be made. A very silly excuse in regard to the latter was made recently by one of the opponents of prohibition in the United States, viz., that if grain were not made into spirituous liquor there would be a shortage of brewers' grains to feed to cattle. Surely it does not require very deep logic to conclude that if grain must be fed to cattle it is better to give them the grain fresh from the field, rather than the soaked fermented, tampered-with product of

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