

second, to fix prices lower than they now are. Miracles or not, that is what the public expects. In my humble opinion, formed from some years' observation of myself and my fellow-man, the way to regulate food consumption and food prices is to regulate 'em.

Consider that for a long time our most eminent public men have preached private economy, personal denials of sorts. Do we economize or deny ourselves? We do not—except as we may lack the price of indulgence. That is the cold fact. Advice slides off us as water from the proverbial duck. Not one Canadian in ten has given up a single thing he can afford to pay for. Nor will he until he is made to do it. All kid-glove methods are breaking down nowadays. The world is a grim, serious place to live in, quite different from the world of July, 1914. We should recognize it. If not we must be made to recognize it.

I do not want to be misunderstood. I am no advocate of closing places of amusement, abolition of games and of pleasures generally. I believe these things are good for us. I believe in rational pleasure, games, good air in the lungs and good food in the stomach. I do not believe that short rations are necessary. But that they may not be necessary I believe on going lighter than of old on certain food-stuffs and in plugging the aching void with the more perishable kinds when they may be had. Also, I believe in cutting waste down and out.

Again, I do not wish to be misunderstood. Prices have reached a point which already necessitates rigid economy in many homes. Many people could not

economize further without actual privation, which should not be necessary. That is an enforced condition which a reduction of prices to a sane level would relieve, and which should be relieved. My remarks are not directed to the many people who find a bare living a problem, but to those who go along much as they used to in the old days when the world's food was no problem at all.

Many of us are wasteful from habit in spite of high prices; and we are wasteful in some instances from the best of motives plus habit. Here is an illustration:

One of our favourite ways of raising local funds in peace-time, especially in country districts, was to buy food, cook it, and sell it to ourselves. It was the old village church, strawberry festival, ice cream social idea. The Ladies' Aid and the Missionary Society raised funds that way. When war came we took this system holus bolus and applied it to local war funds. We use it still; and it is all wrong.

I allude specifically to dances, and what are known as "teas" with various prefixes, at which refreshments are sold or provided in return for an admission price, and of which the proceeds go to some excellent war fund. I admit that it is an easy way of raising money. But it means that we eat more than we otherwise would. We buy and eat patriotically, whether we are hungry or not, satisfied that we are helping the good cause. But we quite lose sight of the fact that we have needlessly consumed food which may be urgently needed later on.

A short time ago I was at a reception with dancing

annexed for one of the Princess Pat's boys, wounded and home on leave. The gathering had a further worthy object of raising funds to buy Christmas gifts for the boys at the front, for which purpose an admission price was charged which covered a free twelve o'clock supper. The supper consisted of all sorts of good sandwiches and 'steen kinds of cake. After supper there were a few little speeches, and one of the speakers talked food economy most earnestly. He was quite serious about it, too. But every mouthful of food eaten there represented unnecessary consumption. Oh, yes, I ate my share.

THE other day there was a Red Cross "Tea" in my vicinity. An American visitor said to me, "They call it a 'tea,' but I'd call it a square meal." Then everybody went home and ate the usual evening meal. That isn't food economy; it isn't even common sense.

The foods consumed at these shines are made from staples—flour, sugar, butter, eggs, meat—which are exactly those which should be conserved as much as possible. The single instance is unimportant, but the mass is highly important from a standpoint of national economy; because, in every few miles of territory there is some local branch of some war organization, and these all play much the same system of unnecessary eats.

There is some excuse for these affairs, because they do raise money, and they do accomplish things. But there is no excuse at all for elaborate social between-meals feeds. The idea that elaborate grub is essential to hospitality is silly. People would feel just as well or better if they wiggled along on three meals. There is no privation involved in that. We don't have to coal our bunkers every couple of hours. Unnecessary feeding in the name of patriotism has little excuse; other unnecessary feeding has none at all.

Unless the men who ought to know are monumental liars, and as well in a conspiracy to deceive us, we have to take this food question seriously, apart from the price, which so far has seemed the only serious feature. The latter is serious enough, but the former—or even the possibility of the former—is much more so. America, under normal conditions, is a land of plenty; America to-day, under abnormal conditions, seems a land of plenty. There is no visible scarcity of food if you have the price. Consequently, food shortage, let alone famine, seems as far off, and unreal, and impossible and mythical as war seemed four years ago when it was merely a word to millions whom it has since slain. Nobody paid any attention to alarmists, and so, when it came, we were unprepared.

But if short rations come on the world we shall be almost equally unprepared. For, if they come, they will come quickly, with little warning, as a hailstorm turns a promising grain field to beaten, tangled ruin.

Let us suppose, just to see what it feels like, that this year's crop in America had failed. Suppose we had to feed ourselves and our men overseas, and a large proportion of the population of Britain and France until the summer of 1918. We should have to do it on the surplus of our 1916 crop. Well, then, what sort of raft-in-the-ocean, desert-isle rations should we have to go on? It is well worth thinking about.

Did you ever think what a crop failure on this continent would mean just now, not to the abstract idea of victory or the cause of civilization or to some one somewhere else; but to us, here, individually, in our own personal stomachs? We have never had a real crop failure, but the only reason we haven't is that the country isn't old enough. All other countries have had them. The possibility exists; indeed, the the practical certainty of it some time exists. The cause might be continental rain or the lack of it, heat or cold. But a few weeks would settle the matter. From a confident anticipation of the usual renewal of food by the usual harvest we should have to face a year without either, that is, on our surplus. But we annually export our surplus, or most of it, before the next crop, and we simply have to do it now; so that when we realized the failure we should have no surplus to fall back on. Where could we buy food? Nowhere, for nobody has any surplus. Then—famine!

Sounds like a silly improbability, doesn't it? So did war. A year ago American editors referred loftily to "the madmen of Europe." Even the Chal-

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WILL HUNGER STOP THE WAR?



50,000 Swedes, expecting hunger, recently massed in Malmö, Sweden, to protest against food shortage. The American embargo to keep neutrals from supplying Germany with food may have had some effect. Europe's pantry is in America—including Canada. Sweden is suffering more from food shortage than half the nations at war. Hunger, the great leveller of mankind, may do more to put an end to the war than fighting or Socialist protests. A great strike mass-meeting was recently called in Stockholm as a protest against any more war. Similar outbreaks—so-called a hand-bill—were being organized in many German cities. World-hunger—climaxing in Germany and Austria—may yet end the world war.