

be spied upon in order that the commercial classes may arbitrarily take advantage."*

The first result of the *Maximum* was that every means was taken to evade the fixed price imposed, and the farmers brought in as little produce as they possibly could. This increased the scarcity, and the people of the large cities were put on an allowance. Tickets were issued authorizing the bearer to obtain at the official prices a certain amount of bread or sugar or soap or wood or coal to cover immediate necessities.†

But it was found that the *Maximum*, with its divinely revealed four rules, could not be made to work well—even by the shrewdest devices. In the greater part of France it could not be enforced. As to merchandise of foreign origin or merchandise into which any foreign product entered, the war had raised it far above the price allowed under the first rule, namely, the price of 1790, with an addition of one-third. Shopkeepers therefore could not sell such goods without ruin. The result was that very many went out of business and the remainder forced buyers to pay enormous charges under the very natural excuse that the seller risked his life in trading at all. That this excuse was valid is easily seen by the daily lists of those condemned to the guillotine, in which not infrequently figure the names of men charged with violating the *Maximum* laws. Manufactures were very generally crippled and frequently destroyed, and agriculture was fearfully depressed. To detect goods concealed by farmers and shopkeepers, a spy system was established with a reward to the informer of one-third of the value of the goods discovered. To spread terror, the Criminal Tribunal at Strassburg was ordered to destroy the dwelling of anyone found guilty of selling goods above the price set by law. The farmer often found that he could not raise his products at anything like the price required by the new law, and when he tried to bold back his crops or cattle, alleging that he could not afford to sell them at the prices fixed by law, they were frequently

* See Levasseur, as above, vol. 1, pp. 195-225.

† See specimens of these tickets in the White Collection in the Connell Library.