



Whether Common or Not

By Will M. Maupin.

A Few Reminiscences

The other evening I fell to ruminating on a lot of things, but chiefly on the "high cost of living." Perhaps the fact that it was the first of the month and "bill day" was responsible for it. Anyhow, after digging up to satisfy the butcher and baker and candlestick maker I boarded a train of thought and took a ride.

Of course we are spending more for living expenses than we used to spend, but isn't it a fact that it is because we deem a lot of things necessities now that we and our parents used to look upon as luxuries? Take electric lights, for instance. During October I spent almost \$4 for lighting my humble little cottage—and we just couldn't get along without electric lights. But wouldn't our parents have had a duck fit if the monthly kerosene bill had amounted to one-fourth of that?

And thirty or forty years ago we used to huddle around an old barrel stove, crammed full of wood, on a winter's evening. Only one room was "het" in those days. Now we have a furnace in the basement and the very thoughts of going to bed in a cold bedroom give us the shivers. I believe that my father used to get through an entire winter with a fuel bill about equal to what mine is for one of the winter months.

Then we used to get our water from a pump, lugging it into the house. Every winter morning we had to thaw the pump out, too. Now we have to have water in the kitchen, and all we do is turn the faucet. If the pipe's freeze up—and they do—it means a big plumber's bill, or a plumber's big bill, whichever way you want to put it.

If we were content to get along with what our parents got along with, living would be pretty cheap these days. I can remember when we got eight or nine pounds of light brown sugar for a dollar; when we paid a dollar a pound for tea, and \$2 for a 50-pound sack of flour, and 25 cents for calico that we now get for 6 or 8 cents; and for \$2.50 we got a better pair of shoes than we now get for \$4.50, even if they didn't look quite so "swell" in those days; and 40 cents a gallon for kerosene; and if father paid over \$7.50 for a suit of clothes for me I was prouder than a king, while now it costs from \$18 to \$20 for a suit that isn't a bit better, although rather more sightly.

Laws-a-massy, if we got one dish of ice cream a month on an average in the old days we were dissipating a lot; now it's almost a staple article of diet. Then we usually got a couple of weekly papers, usually the county paper and a religious journal, although some of the wealthy people actually subscribed for Harper's or Littell's Living Age. Now we have to have a morning paper at the breakfast table, and about a dozen magazines and from three to a dozen weekly papers. And we need them, too.

Then there's the telephone. Say, the telephone is responsible for a lot of expense that our parents knew nothing about. It is so easy to telephone to the grocer's and order any old thing we happen to think of—and the grocer usually manages to remind you of a few things you never thought about.

And the women folks, bless 'em!

Unless one of them is fortunate enough to have a sealskin jacket the husband is due to buy a new cloak about every other year—usually every year. Say, Mr. Man, wouldn't your good wife pour warm words into your ear if you suggested that she buy a good warm shawl and wear it winter after winter, like your mother did? I remember that when a very small boy a wealthy member of the church where father preached gave mother a fine Paisely shawl. I guess she was about the proudest woman in America that winter—and for a score of succeeding winters. She wore it until I was a man grown, and it is today a precious heirloom. But wouldn't our wives "holler" if they had to wear the same cloaks twelve or fifteen years in succession?

I don't know whether we live any better than our parents did, for they seemed to thrive and enjoy life. But some of our necessities now would have appalled them then. We love to sit around and complain about the high cost of living, but, after all, perhaps our troubles are due in large part to the cost of high living.

Do you remember how you used to go barefooted until it became so cold that the frozen clods fairly cut into your feet, and then how father used to take you down to the village store and buy you a pair of copper-toed boots? That pair of boots had to last you until the green got back in the trees—and usually we had to make 'em last two winters. All of us went barefooted when we were kiddies, but the sight of a barefooted child is unusual in these latter days. With five husky, growing, romping kiddies around the house it just seems as if I averaged buying about five pairs of shoes a month—and it is aggravating, too, because it does seem as if every one of the five demands a new pair at the same time.

And the matter of restaurants and hotels. Thirty or forty years ago you paid 25 cents—maybe 50 for a room at the hotel. Now you pay a dollar or a dollar and a half—two dollars if you are a bit extravagant. And if any moderate hotel charged more than 50 cents for a meal there was a yell loud enough to be heard over in the next county. A quarter was the average price for a meal then, but a quarter won't buy more than coffee and rolls now. Today we go into a dining room, have a colored gentleman slide a chair under us, hand us a napkin, hustle a glass of water, hand us a bill of fare and then rearrange all the things on the table while we scan the menu. "Fillet of beef, 60c;" "potatoes, any style, 10c;" "coffee, 10c;" and so on. If we are not very hungry we escape on a dollar. And we don't think about it as being extravagant until the first of the month when we begin trying to make the previous month's income cover the outlay. And while we are trying it we are complaining about "the high cost of living."

Let's forget it! If we are not content to live as our parents lived, and must have a lot of things they never dreamed of, let's pay the bill without grumbling.

Ever Notice

That the best bargain sales always happen when you are broke?
That you discover you are out of

coal just when the blizzard strikes your vicinity?

That when you have a bad cold you get a thousand "sure cures" that cured everybody but you?

That the best trips always happen when you are too busy to take them?

That it is easy to find kindling-wood in the summer when we don't need it, and awfully hard in the winter when we just must have it?

That it is a lot easier to think of things like these than it is to think about pleasant things?

Brain Leaks

A cheap man always delivers a similar line of goods.

The man who says he never makes mistakes is making a mighty big one.

It costs a lot to be a "good fellow," but it costs nothing to be a good man.

This is the season of year when everybody is advised to "do your Christmas shopping early," and nobody does it.

So far we have managed to resist the temptation to purchase one of those fuzzy hats—but we can feel ourselves slipping.

Nothing tickles us more than the sight of a man with false teeth who thinks that he is concealing the fact that he wears 'em.

We never see a young man with a beautifully curled moustache but what we wonder a bit how much time he wasted on it.

The man or woman who knows how to grow old gracefully has acquired about all the knowledge necessary to make life worth living.

If we had made the world we would have left out a lot of the troublesome things, and quite likely overlooked making most of the good things.

We are waiting for some household economic sharp to tell us how to keep the baby from kicking all the bedclothes off in the middle of the night.

We are mighty happy to relate that the Little Woman has never yet made the Architect a Christmas present manufactured after the directions for a "Beautiful Christmas gift for father" found in the Woman's Household Comforter.

A PERSONAL WORD

I am mailing out "Kiddies Six" to subscribers this week. You'll get your copy in a few days. I know I promised them October 10, but I didn't figure on delays. Couldn't get the cloth I wanted for binding, and rather than take something inferior I waited. Sorry I couldn't find time to write every subscriber and explain the delay, but didn't have time. Neither did the Little Woman. But the books are going out now—and it's worth the wait. That is, I think so. Anyhow it's the best I had in me.

I'll send you one postpaid for a dollar. "Kiddies Six" contains a lot of the verses that have appeared in The Commoner from time to time during the last five or six years—my verses, mostly about the children and home and home things. You may not like the book after you get it, and if you do not, send it back and I'll return the dollar. That's fair, isn't it? Thank you for your patience. I won't promise my next volume until the printer delivers it to me. Sincerely yours, WILL M. MAUPIN.

COMMON KIND

"What has become of that man who used to say he was a servant of the people?"

"The people had to let him go," replied Farmer Cornrossel. "He got to be one of these hired men who stand around talkin' when they ought to be at work."—Washington Star.

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