

A BLESSING IN DISGUISE

Thonas MacLellan, '46

The familiar adage, "It's an ill wind that blows nobody good", finds striking exemplification in Canada's war-time measure of rationing. Canadians, blessed with an abundance of almost everything and with a super abundance of many commodities, too seldom gave any serious thought in days of peace and plenty to the virtues that should adorn the life of a Christian people. Prodigality, inordinate attachment to material goods, excess in eating, and selfishness too often supplanted the virtues of thrift, temperance, and charity. Rationing, though introduced to conquer Hitler, may well serve to help us overcome our Private Enemy Number One, ourselves; rationing may become a powerful antidote for our vicious habits of life and help us to acquire virtues that will make us more worthy of being called Christians.

The prodigality of Canadians in pre-war days made them comparable to the spendthrift of the Gospel parable. Millions of gallons of gasoline and thousands of rubber tires were wasted in the unnecessary and often useless driving of automobiles; clothes, more than sufficient to dress all the orphans, all the homeless, and all the destitute in Canada, were wasted; and the amounts of butter left on butter plates and sugar left undissolved in cups of tea and coffee would more than have supplied the needs of all Canada's hungry deprived of these articles of the pantry.

But conditions have changed with the introduction of rationing. Today Canadians know that they can get along with less, and they are learning how to practise thrift. The value of their learning this lesson of thrift can scarcely be estimated, for not only are they making an important contribution to the war effort, but are, or should be, saving sufficient money to meet days in the future that may be less prosperous.

When the lesson of thrift has been mastered the practice of liberality should be undertaken. This can be greatly simplified by our learning that we are only the stewards of our material possessions, and that we shall have to render an account of them when the days of our stewardship are ended.

If men fully realized the meaning of ownership, they would not be inordinately attached to worldly goods, but, on the contrary, would be well disposed to dispense a great part of them for the relief of the hungry, the destitute, and the homeless. Thus the learning of the true meaning of ownership is a most important step towards liberality; and liberality is the solution of the problems of "the poor you have always with you."

Another needed lesson that rationing should help to teach us is that of moderation in the pleasures of the table. Doctors tell us that the lives of thousands are shortened by excessive eating, and they brand the excessive use of candy and other sweets as especially injurious to children. Rationing seems to offer a partial remedy for some of these evils and to be a means of safeguarding the health of many Canadians. The rationing of meat may save many, especially those who lead sedentary lives, from certain kidney ailments; and the rationing of sugar certainly should be a preventive of diabetes in adults, and of prematurely decayed teeth in children.

Again, excess in eating is directly opposed to the Christian practice of mortification. It weakens man's intellectual and moral life, paves the way to sinful pleasures, and can easily cause moral ruin. Persons who are inordinately attached to pleasures of eating certainly are not following the advice of St. Paul, "Whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God."

Thus rationing, in forcing us to moderation in the use of certain foods, is teaching us the practice of moderation in eating, and this practice will be rewarded by better health of both soul and body.

The spirit of greed and selfishness, which for years has been bringing untold misery to thousands in this country, should be counteracted in great measure by our present system. Rationing is forcing us to deprive ourselves of pre-war quantities of tea, butter, sugar, and other things, for the benefit of those whose necessity is greater than ours. Not only are we not suffering from this war-time measure, but we are beginning to realize more and more that rationing is an important means of winning the war and of restoring peace and happiness to the world. In thus learning to do without things for the sake of others, we are learning to great lesson of Christian charity. If this lesson be fully mastered, we

should be better disposed in the future to contribute to charitable and all worthy causes, and we shall have learned the real pleasure and great benefits of Christian charity.

Rationing, then, must not be regarded as a necessary evil. Not only is it helping us to win World War II, but it is rendering us valuable assistance in stamping out vices by which we have long been victimized.

World War II. is well advanced in its fourth year. So far, not a single Nazi bomb has been dropped on Canadian soil; not a town or even a village has gone hungry or naked because of the war; indeed, the ordinary citizen is enjoying a measure of material prosperity that he did not know before September 1, 1939. The mere thought of the devastating bombings of London, Turin, and Berlin, the almost total annihilation of Coventry and Lidice, the wholesale slaughter of the Poles, the starvation of the valiant Greeks, the nakedness of freezing Russians, and the gloominess of once gay Paris should make us realize that Canada, during these days of war, is a Promised Land. Canadians, therefore, have no reason whatsoever to complain about any inconvenience that may arise from rationing; and indeed they are not complaining. Fully aware of the contribution that Canada is making to the war effort by the fruits of rationing, we welcome the new restrictions; and, realizing that rationing is teaching us virtues that will make us more virile citizens and better Christians, we are convinced that rationing is a blessing in disguise.



Surely the actions of men seem to be the justest interpreters of their thoughts, and the truest standards by which we may judge them.

—*H. Fielding.*

Fear to do base unworthy things is valour;
If they be done to us, to suffer them is valour too.

—*Ben. Johnston.*