



Whether Common or Not

By WILL M. MAUPIN.

Who Will Answer?

The architect of this department is in receipt of the following letter, which the writer says is not for publication. But the architect takes the liberty of printing it, suppressing the name and address of the writer for obvious reasons. It is printed for the purpose of securing, if possible, a reply to the question the writer asks:

"Dear Sir: I was very much interested in your article, 'A Newspaper Man's Christmas,' in The Commoner of December 23. I do not wish to deny your theory, but I wish to point out one fact which you seem to have overlooked and that is, if you had been what you represented yourself to be to your friends you would have had some delicacy in approaching friends as you did. I know this from both sides of the question. Men who are really deservng of charity are the last to call for it—especially from men who have always considered them able to take care of themselves.

"And now I come to my reason for writing you. By your own showing you are a pretty good and convincing talker or you could not have gotten in three dinners in one day. With something like three million other men in the United States I am out of employment. Being a cripple, I am unable to do manual labor. I have a family of eight. Will you kindly solve for me the problem of furnishing even one dinner a day for them? Remember it is not alms, but a chance to make an honest living that I want. I like your stories because they tell something of real life. And your evident

love for children will endear you to every parent."

The architect would give most of his limited earthly possessions if he could but make satisfactory answer to the query propounded by his correspondent. It is a query as old as the ages. Perhaps it will be answered some day. And perhaps somebody now is able to give the answer.

Here is a letter the architect must print, although he has to take his natural modesty by the throat and choke it into submission. Parenthetically the architect cheerfully admits that one of the bpleasures he gets out of life is to receive, as he does, letters from unknown friends the country over, expressing a liking for his humble little efforts to please through this department of The Commoner:

St. Paul, Minn., January 2.—Mother and I were deeply touched by your beautiful Christmas poem in The Commoner, which echoes the sentiments of our own hearts more than any other we have seen. I take this occasion to express our appreciation of your page in The Commoner, and to wish you and yours a happy new year.—Paul W. Cole.

And here is a brief extract from a letter written by an old-time printer pal, who happened to see the architect's story of his experience in getting away with three Christmas dinners while disguised as a member of the "down and out" club. Only an extract is given, because the whole letter would give away some deep dark secrets:

Winnipeg, Man., January 5.—Dear Bill: Way up here in the frozen north, I chanced to run across a Commoner containing your story of mooching the Christmas eats. I appreciated the story, because you and I have turned that trick together while touring the country. When it comes to putting the front you always were there with the goods, and I can see you getting the best there was left in the castles of the men you tackled for the Christmas hand-outs. But, Bill, old man, I challenge you to write the facts about that little incident in which you and I played prominent parts when we were walking the country roads of central Missouri 'way back in '83. That was once when your big front turned out to be very much cluttered up back yard. * * * Glad to know you are settled down and eating regularly at your own board. I'll be down some of these days and pan-handle you just to show you I haven't forgotten how.—"Shorty" Meyers.

If "Shorty" ever comes down and tells that story there'll be a coroner's inquest, with the architect as the chief witness.

The Usual Result

"What's the matter between you and Strivers?" asked Smithers of Wilkins.

Wilkins is in the coal business. "O, I didn't know there was anything the matter between us," replied Wilkins.

"Well, there is," said Smithers. "Strivers is calling you all kinds of bad names; says you are a grafter, a shark; a wart on society."

"That's strange," mused Wilkins. "The only explanation I can think of is that Strivers has been owing me a

forty dollar coal bill for three years, and I have been asking him to pay up."

Never Again

"I suppose," gushed the gushing young darsel, "that as you work here in the gathering twilight you often stop to look at the golden orb of day as it sinks slowly to rest, and as it sinks you see painted in the glowing skies beautiful pictures that arouse within your bosom ambitions—ambitions which never may be realized but which lift your soul to a higher realization of the joys and opportunities of life. Is it not true, sir?"

"Well," replied Joshua Simpkins, "I have not—that is, not since I signed the pledge and j'ined the church."

Surprised

"Young man, before I give my consent to your marriage with my daughter I want to know if you are prepared to support a family?"

"That, sir," replied Lotso Nerve, "depends upon how expensive your family is, but I have no hesitancy in saying that I am amply able to support that part of your family I desire to take into my keeping."

Politically Defined

"Miranda!" called papa from the head of the stairs, "is that young man a 'standpatter'?"

"Sh-h-h, papa," whispered Miranda from the bottom of the stairs, "he is just beginning to show progressive symptoms."

A Masculine Admission

What was it made what mother'd bake

Seem just right?

And Echo, who makes no mistake, Said, "Appetite!"

And what makes modern cooking taste

So stale and raw?

Then Echo spake with sudden haste,

"Dys-pep-si-a!"

The "old oaken bucket that hung in the well"

With germ-ridden moss was covered completely.

'Twas thirst from hard work in the unshaded dell

That made the cool water within it taste sweetly.

The sal'rateus biscuit with brown streaks in it,

And yellow, and soggy, were a constant delight;

'Twas hunger from work every daylighted minute

That gave us the joys of a keen appetite.

The sparkling, clear water we draw from a pipe

Is stale, tasteless stuff when thirst we're assuaging;

'Tis chewing tobacco, the meerchaum o'er ripe,

And beer and such stuff, that our palates are ageing.

The light, flaky biscuits we now have to eat

Are triumphs of art in the line gustatory.

Alas and alack! With our stomach dead beat

We have to fall back on that "like mother" story.

Our wives can give both cards and spades

To old-time cooks.

The tripping phrase, "Like mother made,"

Sounds well—in books.

The fault is not that modern "eats"

Are so degraded.

Truth says: "Your taste, through beer and sweets,

Is stale and jaded."



"We Never Had a Chance Like This to Furnish Our Home"

"How easy it would have been," think the old couple in the picture, "to have furnished our home if an offer like this had been sent to us in our younger days, but we are not too old to spruce up a little bit yet, and we will order that new dining-room table that we have wanted so long. With the liberal offer made to us by the Spiegel, May, Stern Company, in this catalog, we won't have to pinch and scrape to pay for it."

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