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AN IDEA FOR LORD WOOLTON

SIR,—Would it not be a good idea if Lord Woolton did a little week-end visiting? And by that I don't mean a cottage-in-Sussex-with-a-hamper-from-Fortnum's kind of week-end, but he might do worse than begin with the 'George and Dragon' at "Puddleton Magna." Then perhaps the next one as the guest of a farmer like Mr. Hosier or Mr. A. G. Street, or a smallholder like Mr. Tom Wibberley, any of whom could enlighten him about the "facts of life," of which, especially as they concern the hen, he seems so woefully (not to say wilfully) ignorant. On second thoughts, for the sake of his hostesses, perhaps Lord Woolton had better take a hamper from Fortnum's. Otherwise he will very likely get no rationed foods, and certainly no gooseberries, strawberries, potatoes, tomatoes, carrots, fish, chickens, rabbits, ducks, milk, or, of course, eggs. Nor beer or cigarettes, but that is another story.—Yours faithfully,
MARGARET MILLER.
Chancel End, Heytesbury, Wilts.

A PERTINENT QUESTION

SIR,—Could the rather smelly contents of one small dustbin be a clue to possible dangerous aspects of the organisation in this country to maintain the people's health? I am having a baby. As so earnestly desired by the Government, I have evacuated from London to have this baby. I took this small furnished house; after first satisfying myself that the sanitary arrangements were suitable for a baby. The refuse was collected regularly. Some three or four weeks before the arrival of the baby, the authorities have stopped collecting refuse from this house and say that they do not intend to resume.

Whether or not women are required, as a contribution to the war-effort, before and during the process of bearing a child, to labour digging pits in the garden deep enough for the burying of refuse is perhaps a minor issue. What appears to be even more serious is the fact that this represents a deliberate decline in the sanitary arrangements of the countryside at a time when children have been encouraged to go there. We have had no bombs down here. Perhaps we country dwellers feel that all should suffer alike. If our water-mains and our sewers are not fractured by bombs, and if, in fact, at this important time our sanitary arrangements are in no way impaired by enemy action, it seems that we know what to do about it. We can help ourselves and our children to a share of danger by abandoning the collection of refuse.—Yours faithfully,
"Pighule," Bix, near Henley-on-Thames. BERYL BUTLER.

TAX-FREE INCOMES FOR INVALIDS

SIR,—No one up to now appears to have considered the plight of chronic invalids, or physically disabled persons, with small fixed incomes under the present heavy scale of war-time taxation. Unable to work themselves, and often obliged to employ someone to look after them and do the work of the house, they are faced with grave difficulties in the present and penury in the future should the next Budget be even more severe. Where the total income does not exceed £250 per annum and the recipient is an invalid, dependent upon a fixed income and unable to earn, then the whole or greater part of that income should be freed of liability to tax. With the high cost of living now ruling this is not only an urgent necessity, but mere humanity. The matter should be put before the Chancellor of the Exchequer and adjusted without delay, so that many weak and suffering people shall not have the additional burden of privation placed upon them in the grim winter ahead.—Yours faithfully,
A SYMPATHISER.

SAVE WHAT WATER?

SIR,—I am moved by a recent incident and my memory of an earlier one to ask: "Is it necessary that we should waste reams of paper and pots of paste in displaying appeals to 'Save Water'?"

In the last war I was a member of the Officers' Club at General Headquarters, Montreuil-sur-Mer. I liked to drink water with some of my meals there. I found it difficult to obtain. I suggested that it might be put on the table so that I could help myself without troubling the unwilling waiter. A special meeting was called to consider the proposal. The Brigadier in the chair, regarding me as an Oliver Twist, asked with outward tolerance and veiled sarcasm if I suggested that water should be placed on every table. I said: "Yes, I thought it would be for the general convenience." "Not on mine" interposed a good-natured humorist, evoking loud guffaws on all sides—and there the matter ended. The water was saved.

In the present war I am by virtue of my occupation a member of a refreshment-club in a Government office. I find it even more difficult to get water. A few days ago at lunch I felt a longing for it, almost as strong as David's. I offered three different serving-maids sixpence for a glass of the precious fluid. They all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said: "If I gave it you, everybody would want it." The second said: "We have no drinking water on this floor, only domestic water." The third said: "We have no staff to fetch water." I fetched a glass of drinking water myself from the room of an unsuspecting official on the floor in question.

Today at lunch I drank an unnecessary glass of beer. Tonight I

heard Sir Robert Kindersley innocently appeal to me to "save beer." Tomorrow I shall see an unnecessary appeal to me to "Save Water." And I, like Dives, shall continue in torment.
MURVA.

WAR- AND PEACE-AIMS

SIR,—In view of the hopes which have been expressed that non-belligerent countries will subscribe to the disinterested declaration of our aims in this war of "right against wrong," it is as well to remind ourselves that peoples and Governments are more likely to be swayed by self-interest than by sentiment. At the outbreak of this war Italian friends told me that, while they liked the English better than Germans, their interests lay in siding with the latter. The British would not devastate their country as the Germans most certainly would: the fate of Poland was too recent and clear a warning. The same feeling must be behind Turkey's reluctance to come in with us. She will let through the Dardanelles an armed Italian oil-tanker to bring out oil, but refuses passage to our warships and transports which might by now have turned the scale against the Germans in the S.W. Ukraine. An invitation for all to come in and share the economic advantages of a great federation of free-trade countries might be much more attractive; and such a federation would be the surest guarantee of continual peace.—Yours faithfully,
P. F. FYSON.
19 Dean Street, Blackpool.

"TALK ABOUT THE LAND"

SIR,—I think Mr. Massingham must keep bees; there is such a buzzing in his bonnet. What exactly does he want? I say that his book is excellent as far as it goes; and he doesn't like that. I give a full list of its contents and indicate that it is in general, "the case against the agricultural systems of today and for a new agricultural system of tomorrow," and he doesn't like that. I refer to the conditions of "at least the last 150 years," but Mr. Massingham, who apparently cannot subtract, makes it mean 1830, and he doesn't like that. Then he says that because *The Village Labourer* deals "with the conditions of 1830" I have the audacity to say that I did not refer to 1830. Unfortunately *The Village Labourer* deals with a period, ending in 1830, but beginning in 1760. This means I should have said "at least the last 180 years"; but I have no doubt that Mr. Massingham will, by his unique system of arithmetic, still make it 1830.

But the real difference between Mr. Massingham and myself is not these and other points of fact but of attitude. It is when I read a statement like "we are not as our forefathers were," which Mr. Massingham endorses in his preface, that I begin to doubt the value of some of the chapters in *England and the Farmer*. If Dr. Picton means that he was not as my forefathers were, then he is, of course, quite correct. In the last century my forefathers worked on the land; most of them could read but not write; some could write but not read; their average wage was from six to twelve shillings a week; they brought up families of fourteen cum sixteen at an average of ninepence per head per week; they made shirts at sixpence a piece, finding their own buttons and cotton, and did not make a song about it; they were hired at hiring fairs; they ate meat once a month or waited at the doors of the big house for the soup of charity. I am not generalising or romanticising; these were my forefathers and this is how they lived. Perhaps Mr. Massingham will now begin to understand why I cannot take seriously his pretty picture of the grand old days populated by "the craftsmen, the yeomen, the labourers, the poets and the celebrants of earth's due festivals," and why I think his book might have had more value if the labourer, the labourer's wife, the educationist and the country clergymen had given us their views on a new order for the land. I will leave it to Mr. Massingham to deduce from these remarks whether I am politically conservative or anti-conservative. I am only very certain—and very glad—that I am not as my forefathers were.

Finally, Mr. Rolf Gardiner challenges me to say "precisely and exactly which of my ideas originated east of the Rhine." On page 97 of *England and the Farmer* Mr. Gardiner advocates land-service, or work-camps, declares that "the time has come for a rapid expansion of these courses and camps," and then discusses them enthusiastically for several pages. In a pamphlet called *Youth and the Nation* he says "Land-service, or work-camps, originated in pro-Nazi Germany and were the forerunners of the *Reichswehrdienst*, which some have thought the most impressive feature of Nationalist Socialist training." Yours, &c.
H. E. BATES.

[This correspondence is closed.—Ed., *The Spectator*.]

"LOOKING BACK"

SIR,—I am afraid I must disclaim the statement—made by Messrs. Secker and Warburg in their letter published in your issue of August 15th—that my book, *The Struggle for the Spanish Soul*, has no translation. My publishers' mistake is easily explained since, so far as they were concerned, the book existed in English only. In point of fact your reviewer was right: the original was written in Spanish. It was translated by my wife.—Yours, &c.,

Brooklands, Fladbury, Worcs.

ARTURO BARRA.