1942

We Britons Tighten Our Belts

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Recommended Citation

Sharp, Mr. and Mrs. (1942) "We Britons Tighten Our Belts," The Iowa Homemaker: Vol. 22 : No. 8 , Article 5.
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol22/iss8/5
We Britons

Tighten Our Belts

In a letter from England, Mr. and Mrs. Sharp of Somerset explain how rationing has changed food habits

The people of Britain are again being warned that they will have to tighten their belts still further. The next six months, according to the Minister of Food, Lord Woolton, will be the leanest of the war thus far. The warning does not frighten nor dismay us because despite ship shortages and other problems of war, no one will go hungry. The notice is taken as further general offensive plans against the Axis and the price we civilians will have to pay for victory.

A little while ago we were allowed to take sugar in place of jam ration so we were able to make plum jam. The majority of us put up plums in preserve without sugar; some of us are hopeful enough to believe that sugar will be plentiful when we open the bottle of plums. There was a shortage of preserving jars and many of us were wondering what to do as not all of us knew of the method of melted candle grease. An enterprising firm used scrap metal in making a patent top and chip which fastened on to the two pint jam jar. The chips were 50 cents per dozen.

The children still have precedence in the matter of oranges. So much in the vegetable line is sold by weight now, cucumbers being the latest victims to the scales. In some parts of England there has been a shortage of vinegar which had an effect on the sale of beetroot, as the English like to eat it with vinegar. We haven’t had the Americans long enough over here to make us appreciate how nice beetroots are as a hot vegetable. For some, the French dressing on salad has become extinct due to no olive oil in the grocer’s and only a little at the chemist, which must not be sold without a doctor’s certificate.

Quite a good supply of boiling fowls crept into market this summer due to the poultry keepers not having enough food to keep the fowls alive. There is something in the patent food for fowls which is having an effect on the flesh. It is dry and tasteless and not worth the price. When a fowl is reared in the farm, where it may have scratch corn and possibly a little skim milk, then the flesh is worth while, but otherwise it is poor.

Eggs have almost disappeared—we have had about 12 in as many weeks and even the tins of dried eggs have not been on sale for two months. However, we wouldn’t like anyone to think we go short of food. Far from it, but we are having to learn many new tricks in housekeeping. Milk and cheese have been plentiful for some months, after a period of shortage.

At the moment the fuel shortage is our chief grumble and is bracketed with the black-out at the top of our Bad Things list. We call ours a coalition government.

We do not know how much may be said about the American Army in England. Briefly, the general public were at first taken aback to find that American might mean colored folk. This presents an awkward problem with some of our girls in the poorer classes, as there is no sort of colour distinction in this country. The American girls in war service work look very bonny indeed. So far we have no get-together arrangements but committees are being formed and we hope soon we may be entertaining some of the lads and lassies. We have had a few conversations in streets and shops but so far they have not led anywhere.

We have the impression that coming from a land of plenty into one of so many restrictions and shortages has led to a good deal of homesickness. With practically everything eatable rationed and drinkable hard to come by and all of us engaged on national work of some sort in our spare time, it certainly is difficult to entertain these soldiers from overseas.