



Vol. 2, No. 12, March 20, 2020

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## From the Editor

Hello all!

I hope everyone is staying safe and healthy – and sane.

This morning as I was working on the final stages of this issue, I was thinking that being lovers of historical fiction -either as authors, or readers, or both – is a benefit to us during these days of confusion, tension, and change.

Yes, this incidence of pandemic is new to us now. Our world is changing. Our lives have changed. And we're not done seeing the changes yet.

Yet, we've seen it happen before and we know that we will survive. On the other side of this, life will return to normal. It may be a *new* normal, but stability will return.

We've seen it before in our reading, our research, and our writing. World War I, World War II, the Civil War – more wars than we could list. Spanish Influenza in 1918, tuberculosis, polio, The Plague – more devastating illnesses than we can imagine. Earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, blizzards – catastrophes by handfuls. It's all there in history. It's all there in our stories, both fictional and nonfictional.

If we all support one another and come together, and be smart and cautious, while not allowing the fears and concerns to overwhelm us, we as a people will prevail.

Sending you all thoughts of wellness and strength during these tumultuous times.

*Trisha*

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# Fightin' Forties

## Prices in the 1940's

Car: \$800  
Gasoline: 18 cents/gal  
House: \$6,550  
Bread: 8 cents/loaf  
Milk: 34 cents/gal  
Postage Stamp: 3 cents  
Stock Market: 131  
Average Annual Salary: \$1,900  
Minimum Wage: 30 cents per hour



1947 A & P Advertisement

## Rationing

[Wessel's Living History Farm's web site](http://www.livinghistoryfarm.org) is chock full of information and video recordings about farming life in the 1920's, 1930's and 1940's. Here are some snippets of what they have to say about rationing, a wartime part of life that our country had to live with for many years.

If you have internet access, check out their page at:  
[http://www.livinghistoryfarm.org/farminginthe40s/life\\_08.html](http://www.livinghistoryfarm.org/farminginthe40s/life_08.html)

Just a word of warning, you'll probably get lost there for several hours reading up on the fascinating tidbits and listening to the live interviews they have on a vast variety of old-time subjects.

“During the Depression of the 1930s, Americans "did without" because they didn't have jobs to buy food and clothing. During World War II, Americans again "did without," this time because of the war effort. Rationing affected rural America particularly.

The federal government set up a rationing system in 1942 and limited purchases of sugar, coffee, meat, fish, butter, eggs, cheese, shoes, rubber and gasoline. Silk and newly invented nylon were used to produce parachutes, and so women around the world found it hard to get fashion stockings.

Other commodities were in short supply because trade routes were disrupted. Shellac, for instance, was produced in India and was used for building products and music record discs. Because of the war in Asia, trade with India was disrupted, and so new records were hard to come by.”



“An eager school boy gets his first experience in using War Ration Book Two. With many parents engaged in war work, children are being taught the facts of point rationing for helping out in family marketing.” February 1943. From NARA.

“Farm production, however, was vital to the war effort, so farmers got extra rations of gasoline and other staples. Yet, it was hard to get new machinery as factories were retooled to produce tanks rather than tractors.”

“Here's how rationing worked: Each member of the household got a ration booklet, usually distributed at the local school. Each booklet had stamps in it that translated into a certain amount of the commodity being rationed. For instance, there were only enough stamps for one person to buy 28 ounces of meat per week, 4 ounces per day. Merchants collected the stamps when you bought something, and when the stamps were gone so was the item for that week.”

## 1940's Advertisements



1941



1942

**There's One in Every Family... by FABER**

**AND MRS. CASEY WAS GOOD AS HER WORD --- AFTER A FEW WEEKS OF EATING POST'S BRAN FLAKES, CASEY HAD NO MORE GROUND FOR COMPLAINT --- SEE FOR YOURSELF...**

**HEY! COME BACK WITH THOSE POST'S BRAN FLAKES--- I WANNA BE SURE TO GET MY SHARE!!**

**SEE DAD--- GIVE A PERSON TIME TO SET THE TABLE--- YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE THAT LIKES THAT CRUNCHY-NUT-LIKE FLAVOR!**

**CASEY'S SURE A CHARMED MAN! HE USED TO BE THE LAST ONE UP IN THE MORNING--- NOW HE'S ONE OF THE FIRST**

**NO TIME TO WASTE!! I'M DIGGIN' INTO THESE DELICIOUS POST'S BRAN FLAKES RIGHT AWAY!**

**BE AN EARLY BIRD TOO, AND GET THOSE 3 EXTRA BENEFITS!**

**LIFE IS SWELL WHEN YOU KEEP WELL!**

**NO FOOLIN', FOLKS--- THERE IS ONE IN EVERY FAMILY WHO NEEDS POST'S BRAN FLAKES' 3 EXTRA BENEFITS! JUST READ BELOW---**

- To help that one member of your family---serve Post's 40% Bran Flakes to the whole family every morning. You'll all go for their grand flavor---as a cereal, or in tempting bran muffins. And---you'll all help that one get Post's Bran Flakes' 3 extra "keep-fit" benefits:

1. Bran to help prevent constipation due to lack of bulk in the diet.
2. Nourishment of wheat---phosphorus for teeth and bones, iron for blood.
3. Vitamin B<sub>1</sub> added, for energy, appetite, and steady nerves.

And besides, these new Post's Bran Flakes are now toasted by an improved process to give you extra crispness extra sweet---as-a-nut flavor.

**Delicious muffin recipe on p. 104**

1942

**His first solo!**

**FOOL, SCRAMBLED WITH TOMATO ESSENCE**  
Baby's eggs scrambled and a cool sauce for the heat of the family!

**FREE BONUS!** This promotion will bring you a special gift with every purchase of a 12-ounce can of Carnation Milk. The gift is a special recipe for a delicious and healthy meal. To get the gift, simply send in the top of your can to the address below. The gift will be sent to you free of charge.

**TERMS:** Offer good in U.S.A. only. Limit one gift per household. Gift will be sent by first-class mail. Offer ends 12/31/44.

**STERILIZED Carnation Milk**

1944

**FREE ENTERPRISE**

**ICE COLD Lemonade - 10¢**

**WAR STAMPS 25¢ 10¢**

**JELLY ROLL CREAM TORTE**  
4 eggs, separated  
1/2 cup sugar  
1/2 cup butter  
1/2 cup milk  
1/2 cup flour  
1/2 cup vanilla  
1/2 cup cream  
1/2 cup jam  
1/2 cup milk  
1/2 cup flour  
1/2 cup vanilla  
1/2 cup cream  
1/2 cup jam

**FROSTING MERINGUE**  
1/2 cup sugar  
1/2 cup milk  
1/2 cup flour  
1/2 cup vanilla  
1/2 cup cream  
1/2 cup jam

**FREE! 10¢ BONUS OF MILK MILK!**  
A pack of great recipes for the home. Don't miss this special offer. Send in the top of your can to the address below. The gift will be sent to you free of charge.

**TERMS:** Offer good in U.S.A. only. Limit one gift per household. Gift will be sent by first-class mail. Offer ends 12/31/44.

**STERILIZED Carnation Milk**

1945

## 1940's Dinner Recipes

### ***Deviled Chicken Recipe*** (from *250 Ways to Prepare Poultry and Game Birds*)

1 broiling or frying chicken  
Salt and pepper  
1/2 cup fat, melted  
2 tbsp flour  
1 cup hot water or soup stock  
1 1/2 tsp dry mustard  
2 tsp Worcestershire sauce  
2 tsp tomato ketchup  
Paprika

Allow 3/4 lb. chicken per person. Cut chicken into serving portions, season with salt and pepper, and brown in melted fat; remove from pan.

Stir flour into fat; cook until mixture browns and thickens, stirring constantly.

Add hot water or soup stock and next four ingredients to cooked sauce.

Place chicken in sauce, cover pan, and simmer until tender, about an hour.

### ***Pea Croquettes Recipe***

4 cups cooked peas  
2 tbsp minced onion  
2 eggs, slightly beaten  
1/2 cup breadcrumbs  
1/2 tsp salt  
1/8 tsp pepper

Instructions:

1. Force peas through a sieve and add remaining ingredients.
  2. Form into balls and fry in hot deep fat (380°F) for about 3 minutes.
- (Serves 6 to 8.)



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## Author Spotlight – Charles Dickens

This week we welcome back a returning guest author. Charles Dickens was our featured author on [December 20, 2019](#). Today he returns to talk about other writing issues that we didn't have time to get to a few months ago.



**Welcome back, Mr. Dickens! It's a pleasure to chat with you again about writing. You are such a wealth of information and we sorely ran out of time = and space – for more. Thank you for returning to discuss the idea of writing in installments. I believe we also have you scheduled for two other features later in the year.**

'Tis true, tis true. I'm happy to return and pontify on the subject of writing. I had many an occupation in my early years. From a twelve-year-old boy pasting labels on pots of paste-blackening, to working in a law office, and being a cub reporter. But, the writing...that's been my dream. I'm fortunate to have been able to make a living and support my family and children through the wondrous weaving together of words to a page. I'm looking forward to our next December interview, where I can share more about the wondrous world of Christmas time delights.

**Speaking of Christmas, last December you shared with us your "Carol Philosophy." It's not holiday time at the moment, but here on Earth right now we're having our own period of stress and turmoil as we're coping with a worldwide pandemic. I think a large dose of your Carol Philosophy is needed at this time. Could you tell us again what your thoughts are on that subject?**

Ah, my "Carol Philosophy" as I came to think of it, is how the world should behave during holiday time. But yes, from what I'm viewing from my heavenly realm, I can see where this philosophy is greatly needed every day of the year. Not just the few weeks surrounding Christmas. In what I've come to call my 'Carol Philosophy', I describe the holidays as "a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one

consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of other people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys.”

**Thank you for repeating your words. I know I need to take them to heart. All too often right now we’re seeing moments of angriness, greed, and lack of compassion. But, to combat those instances where humanity shows a less pleasant side of ourselves, we’re also seeing many, many acts of compassion, sharing, and love. Hopefully in the days to come, we will see more instances of kindnesses prevailing over the other.**

**Last December, as we were wrapping up our interview, you mentioned writing in installments. Is that something you often did? Can you share a little bit about that?**

I’d be honored, delightfully so. In fact, I still see some of that happening now. Yes, I know, you’re probably surprised that I often peek down from above and take a quick look as to what’s happening on Earth now. My gracious, sometimes I shudder at what I see. Oh, the stories I could write now. Oh, the places I could go with *Oliver Twist* now!

But I digress.

I see what many are doing now, with this thing I hear is called a ‘blog.’ I see where many are writing short pieces, a little at a time. Then, later, they pull these short pieces together and publish as a book. That’s exactly how all my novels came to be.

Albeit, when I look at the writing and publishing methods available today, with all the new technology that has flooded the world since the days I walked on the planet, I afear that I’m sorely jealous.

*The Pickwick Papers*, or more correctly called *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club, Containing a Faithful Record of the Perambulations, Perils, Travels, Adventures and Sporting Transaction of the Corresponding Members*. But I acknowledge that that’s quite a mouthful, so I’ll abide with the more common shortening to *The Pickwick Papers*.

Writing under the pseudonym of Boz, I’d just finished a collaboration on a book called *Sketches by Boz*. The publisher, Chapman & Hall, was pleased with my work and gave me the opportunity to produce a new work for them. *The Pickwick Papers* ran in monthly installments from March 1836 to November 1837. After that, the installments were put together and published as a full novel in 1837.

**And your other novels were completed in much the same fashion?**

Absolutely. *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, even *Great Expectations*. All were written in installments, with a completed novel being the final product. Even my lesser know works, such as *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and such. They too were written in installments, mostly monthly, some weekly.

**Why were some monthly and some weekly?**

The earlier publishers and magazines I wrote for, such as Chapman & Hall, Bentley’s *Miscellany*, and Master Humphrey’s *Clock* were monthly issues. Around the mid 1850’s I began my own publication, in conjunction with a publisher, *Household Words*. The novels, *Hard Times* and *Little Dorrit*, were published in installments through that publication. Unfortunately, a dispute with my partners ended badly.

After that, I began my new periodical, *All the Year Round*, which also ran weekly. In fact, the first issue of *All the Year Round* included the debut issue of *A Tale of Two Cities*. It consisted of 31 issues, from April 1859 to November 1859. *Great Expectations* also was published through this newest venue, from December 1860 to August 1861.

**It sounds like moving to a weekly format amped up the speed of completing a book.**

Yes, indeed, it certainly did. I was writing fast and furious during those years. Why, instead of one installment per month, I needed to increase my output to four installments a month. And I was editing the publications – and doing other writing – at the same time.

**If you wrote your books in installments over this long of a period, it looks to be a period over forty years, your readers must have enjoyed getting the story in short snippets.**

It was a winning idea for all of us. I, as the author, was paid regularly for what I produced. I got paid for each installment, and then again when the book was printed.

The publishers liked it, because publishing the story this way ensured many purchases. Most installment stories ran from twelve to twenty-four, with *A Tale of Two Cities* being printed in 31 installments. If readers were hooked on a story, they'd buy every issue to get the next segment.

The readers benefited from this method too. Remember, back then, most people couldn't purchase books like I see happening in today's world. Most couldn't afford a whole volume when it came out. But the literary magazines were available for a single shilling, a more affordable option.

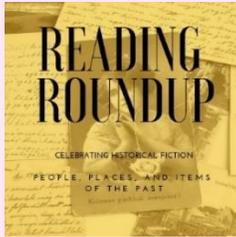
The only one that cost more was the final issue of *The Pickwick Papers*. While mourning the death of my beloved sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth in 1837, I missed a deadline. Consequently, there wasn't a May 1837 issue. The final issue in October 1837 was a double issue, for the cost of two shillings.

**Thank you for your time, Mr. Dickens. We appreciate hearing from you and seeing that installment writing isn't a new thing. This has been around for many years – years before we even thought of writing. We look forward to talking to you again, later in the year on other writing issues.**

You're quite welcome. Time...I've got a lot of that now. I'm pleased for this opportunity to chat with your readers and look forward to coming back and talking a little more about my favorite subject – Christmas.

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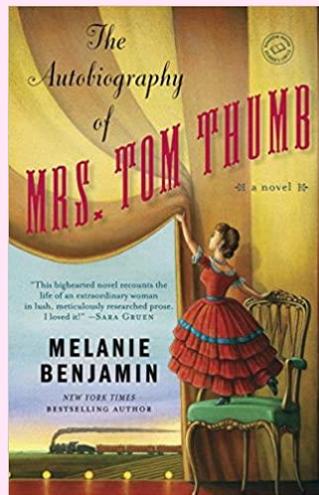
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## The 1800s

### The Autobiography of Mrs. Tom Thumb

Melanie Benjamin



She was only two feet, eight inches tall, but more than a century later, her legend reaches out to us. As a child, Mercy Lavinia “Vinnie” Warren Bump was encouraged to live a life hidden away from the public. Instead, she reached out to the immortal impresario P. T. Barnum, married the tiny superstar General Tom Thumb in the wedding of the century, and became the world’s most unexpected celebrity. Vinnie’s wedding captivated the nation, preempted coverage of the Civil War, and even ushered her into the White House. But her fame also endangered the person she prized most: her similarly sized sister, Minnie, a gentle soul unable to escape the glare of Vinnie’s spotlight. A barnstorming novel of the Gilded Age, *The Autobiography of Mrs. Tom Thumb* is the irresistible epic of a heroine who conquered the country with a heart as big as her dreams—and whose story will surely win over yours.

Look for special features inside. Join the Circle for author chats and more.

BONUS: This edition contains a timeline, an interview with Melanie Benjamin, and an excerpt from Melanie Benjamin's *Alice I Have Been*.

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