



CANADIAN COURIER



VOL. XXII. No. 25
NOVEMBER 17, 1917

An Open Letter to the Food Controller

MY dear Much-Advised:

Did you ever find worms in your porridge? When I was at school I found them frequently—little, white, fat ones—and there was a reason: the porridge was made of oatmeal bought from the grocers in bulk.

Worms may be digestible, especially when well cooked; they probably contain much-needed fats, desirable nourishment for the human body, but I do not propose to eat them—unless your mature reflection says it is a necessary part in winning the war. Then, like a faithful private in the civilian ranks, I shall obey the orders of your generalship.

Of course, the porridge made from bulk cereals is cheaper—if you have a large family. Eliminate the carton and savings can be effected. But may I obstreperously suggest that I would prefer to save in another way. By wearing a broad-brimmed cow-breakfast straw hat I can keep my head cool in summer, and by wearing a tweed cap I can keep it warm in winter—and effect economies amounting to several hundred per cent. My clothes will last longer—several hundred more per cent. be saved—by covering them with a suit of overalls. And I am willing to wear overalls, if it will speed the winning of the war; I would wear them ever so gladly, if I may be spared the consuming of maggots.

The Lord gave you, me, and the rest of us, stomachs which must be filled, but He also gave us palates which must be pleased. To please the one is as necessary as to fill the other.

This morning I saw what appeared to be a frightful waste of food. A farmer gave a perfectly good cabbage to a cow, and she ate it greedily. Asked why such a delicacy should be given a cow, the farmer replied: "It whets the appetite. That cow will eat all the more hay and produce all the more milk because of the cabbage." It was a question of ultimate efficiency. And so it is with breakfast foods.

There is not a shadow of doubt in my mind that the porridge we ate as boys was healthful and nourishing. But in those days we looked upon it as a second cousin to cod liver oil and other equally nourishing and objectionable foods. "You must eat your porridge," mother said in the exact voice she used when playing the role of an allopathic doctor. Porridge was a thing to be taken because it had to be, and not because the appetite craved it.

THERE may be a lot of sentiment in this question of breakfast foods.

But there is sentiment about art or cleanliness and a dozen other things which are well recognized parts of our being. Sentiment is a thing to be reckoned with, although it cannot be weighed and measured like bricks and cotton.

And may I confess that my affection for breakfast foods is not merely cupboard love. I am anxious to see our production of cereal foods raised to the highest possible development, because I am a farmer.

Ordinarily, oats are a low-priced bulky commodity. They will not stand the large freight charges incidental to long shipment. Canada is essentially a cereal-producing country. We cannot feed the Empire—at least we cannot give her a well-balanced meal. Try as we may, Australia will beat us in mutton, and Argentina will beat us in beef;



To the Honorable

W. J. HANNA,

The Food Controller,

Ottawa, Canada

Concerning Breakfast Foods

Denmark can put her eggs and poultry into the United Kingdom fresher and cheaper. But given a fair chance, we ought to be the bread-basket of Old England, and several other countries beside. We have learned how to produce the flour that Englishmen like in their bread. We have established brands which Englishmen have learned to know represent purity and nutriment.

And we were beginning to do the same thing in breakfast foods. Hundreds of thousands of dollars—I cannot say how many—have been invested to this end. Wherever factories have been established, which will convert cereals into palatable, digestible, nourishing foods, the zone of possible cereal-cultivation has been extended. That is where the farmers come in. And you need the farmers now, and will need the farmers hereafter to solve the after-war problems.

We have borrowed from abroad much money with which to conduct the war. No less an authority than Sir Thomas White says that we must pay the interest on that money and some day pay it back by our shipments abroad.

OUR steel and textile manufacturers can't compete with the world; they can't even hold the home market without huge protection. Our only chance, or rather our main chance, to repay our obligations is by cereals and their made-up products.

The Toronto newspapers are consigning political economy to the waste-paper basket. But, none the less, it is impossible to figure out how we are to pay for these loans except by products which we can put on the market cheaper and better than other countries. Is it not reasonable to say that these products must come mainly from agriculture? Is it not reasonable to say that the higher the stage of manufacture to which we bring these products, the greater the sum we will secure for them abroad, and the more easily repay our foreign obligations?

Silk is a luxury, but I fail to find that its production is being handicapped in France, in Italy, or any of the silk-producing countries. I would be surprised to learn that anything was being thrown in the way of the development of this industry. For out of its proceeds these countries must pay a part of their foreign borrowings.

Breakfast foods are not a fad, nor are they a humbug; they are an essential part of the average man's morning meal—and the fact that the manufacturer guarantees their cleanliness has much to do with their popularity and efficiency. If we must spread our savings to win the war, please let us do it in one of the several hundred other ways which will less seriously affect our present and future efficiency.

Yours truly,

MARK KETTS.

P. S.—Perhaps the grocer has his opinions about this also. Some grocers are so used to the package system they have almost discarded the scoop. And there are times when the grocer in a hurry may give my neighbor a few ounces over-weight on a bag of breakfast food. In which case I expect him to square the deal by going a few ounces short on me. The grocer must be protected somehow.—M. K.