

Woman's Quiet Hour

By E. Cora Hind

Concerning Flour

Perhaps no regulation made by the Board of Food Control has been more trying to comply with or more difficult of comprehension to the people on the farms, than the one insisting on the return of flour over and above a certain amount sufficient for certain limited periods, and the matter has been further complicated by the amendment which permits "bona-fide farmers to hold, subject to the order of the Food Control Board, an amount of flour, made wholly or in part from wheat, in excess of the amount prescribed by the original order, provided that on or before the 15th of June, that they return to the miller or dealer from whom it was purchased or by whom it was manufactured, the amount which they are holding." This means that farmers who had not returned their flour promptly, instead of being punished for not doing so, are being permitted to hold it. A number of letters have reached my desk pointing out the injustice and aggravation of these conflicting orders, and I sympathize most profoundly with the farmers and their wives at the inconvenience which has been occasioned them.

I think, however, if the people understood what led up to the orders, they would have more patience with the Food Control Board, and probably more realization of the needs of the return of flour. Last January the Food Control Board announced that at a certain time a standard flour would be issued; namely, a 74 per cent extraction flour, which means that 74 lbs. of flour would be made from 100 lbs. of wheat, instead of 72 lbs., as was the previous custom, and that instead of a variety of grades of flour, there would be one grade only, which would be known as government standard flour. The Food Control Board made its initial mistake when announcing this grade of flour, in not prohibiting the millers and dealers from selling large quantities of white flour then on hand. There would have been no loss to the millers or dealers in such prohibition, as the Wheat Export Company, which buys flour for Britain and the Allies, was prepared to take every pound of flour that the millers in the country could give them. This prohibition was not placed and the public rushed to buy flour, with the insane idea that the standard flour was going to be something very inferior. The result was, in the three weeks preceding the order for the 74 per cent extraction coming into force, the millers and dealers in flour throughout Western Canada sold over 200,000 barrels more than in the corresponding period of any previous year. These sales could mean one thing only—namely, hoarding. While some of this buying was done in the cities, the bulk of this flour went into the country, and it was in an attempt to have this flour returned and made available for the Allies that the order No. 31, of April 25th, was issued.

When the flour began to be returned, two very grave difficulties presented themselves. One was, that undoubtedly quite a percentage of the flour had been exposed, or might have been exposed to contagious diseases, and another was that quite a considerable percentage had been in the hands of alien enemies and might, when returned, have contained ground glass or other injurious substances, and these two difficulties have been hard to overcome. Then on the heels of this trouble was the very real one of the inconvenience of lots of farmers returning flour which they would want again in a month or two. A very common practice of the western farmer is to lay in a yearly or half-yearly supply, and those of them who had done so last fall, found themselves in the same position as the people who had bought flour distinctly for the purpose of hoarding, so far as the law was concerned. The 200,000 barrels that were evidently bought for the purpose of hoarding, were seriously needed by the Allies, in fact, they are seriously needed at the present moment, so that the Food Control Board harassed by the needs of the people overseas, apparently did not give sufficient consideration to the details involved in the working out of their orders,

and they evidently tried to amend matters by the recent amendment of the original order, which, of course, caused some relief to the people still having flour in their possession, but unfortunately was only an added aggravation to those who had already returned their flour. The only consolation to the people who had complied with the law so promptly, was that it showed their entire willingness to meet any demands made upon them for the winning of the war.

Sumptuary Laws

Of all laws, those relating to food and clothing are the most difficult to draft and to enforce, and the laws that are most uniformly resented by the public. Perhaps Canada is one of the most difficult countries in which to make laws with regard to food and enforce them. The country is so large, and food has always been so abundant, that it seems almost impossible to convince people that there is a real necessity for food saving, and that the laws which are made are not merely caprices of the government and the board of food control, but are honest, though sometimes mistaken endeavors of men to meet the terrible situation overseas. When these men entered upon their task, they had no precedent for anything that they did, and the carrying out of the orders which they made has had to be left to an enormous extent, to the honor of the people. The Board of Food Control has learned by very painful experience, that there is a very large section of the community which has no honor in matters of this kind, and will not deprive themselves of anything for the sake of the cause for which so many of their fellow countrymen have died. Perhaps one of the most painful experiences in connection with this very matter of flour hoarding, was to find that a considerable amount of it was done by families who had men at the front. This seems well nigh incredible, and yet it is the absolute truth.

Food will have to be saved from this time onward until the end of the war, no matter how abundant the crops of North America may be this season, and the Food Control Board will have to continue to make regulations, and no doubt, with the very best intentions, they will make mistakes.

I would like to implore the women who read this page to exercise all the patience and charity which they can possibly muster in this matter. It is well to bear in mind that the three men forming the Board of Food Control, are all of them men working without salary, and leaving important business of their own, to endeavor to help their country in this crisis. There is neither honor nor glory in the service on the board, and no man or woman who does not possess a burning desire to help the cause of the Allies, would remain on this board for a single week. The amount of complaint and abuse which is poured in on the heads of these men is simply amazing, and no man who had not undertaken the work from a sense of duty would tolerate it.

Food Control, Food Hoarding and Sumptuary Laws are not the most cheerful topics for a "quiet hour," but I have felt that inasmuch as my duties keep me very closely in touch with the work of the board, and also with the terrible need of food saving for overseas, that I should endeavor to lay before my readers some of the facts that lie behind these apparently inconsistent and unreasonable regulations.

Edmonton Exhibition

At the Edmonton Exhibition, which will be held July 8th to 13th, the directors will demonstrate their policy of paying a great deal of attention to the children; special classes have been provided for boys and girls between nine and seventeen years of age, in pig growing, colt raising, butter making, and other contests. Not only have the bigger children been provided for, but the exhibition association have planned that the mothers shall also enjoy the exhibition, and have decided to again conduct a "baby check room." Sand piles, swings, etc., have been fenced off, where the bigger babies may have a good time, and nurses will be on hand to take care of smaller tots. This accommodation is located near the emergency hospital, just inside the main entrance to the grounds.

The agricultural side of the exhibition, as is proper, occupies the centre place in all these preparations. Owing to the fact that the military still hold part of

the buildings, the exhibition authorities have found it difficult to make adequate accommodation, for all the live stock. But they have obtained the necessary accommodation, and judging from present prospects, this year's Edmonton exhibition will see a new standard set, both in point of numbers, and in the excellence of the exhibits. That Northern Alberta is essentially a mixed farming country is shown in the increase made in recent years; for instance, cattle in Alberta have increased by 500,000 head since 1914. The 440,000 head of swine in the province in 1916 had grown to 730,000 in 1917. Sheep show a similar increase.

The entries for this year close on June 25th. Excursion rates have been obtained, and plans are under way whereby automobile excursions will be run to the Edmonton exhibition. Everything is being done by the directors to popularize the slogan for 1918—"Where City and Country Meet."



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