THE BATTLE BETWEEN WHITE AND BROWN BREAD

In the New York Times of October 3rd there was an editorial under the heading The Taste for White Bread. The Editor quotes from Professor Wood of Cambridge, England, to the effect that white bread is more digestible than brown or graham bread and that it is rich in protein as well as energy producing elements and therefore is preferred by the public and endorsed by Professor Wood. He states it as a fact that white bread “can only be made satisfactorily from a blend of wheat rich in protein” and argues from that fact that the deficiency in practice (of white bread eating) is by no means great. He thinks that this is in the average more than compensative by the greater digestibility of the protein of the higher grade of flour.

In the first place the white flour which Professor Wood commends is superior only because, as he says, it is made from blends of wheat rich in protein. In comparing breads made from white and brown flour the two flours should be made from exactly the same grade of wheat or wheats equal in protein content, in order that a sound conclusion may be reached. Obviously it would be unfair to compare the protein values of any two kinds of bread that are not made from the same quality of wheat. It is equally certain that the white bread contains no more protein than the brown bread made from the same grade of wheat.

As to the question of the relative digestibility of the two kinds of bread I would call attention to the fact that it has never been shown that the protein element in the brown bread is less digestible or that less of it is digested than in the white bread when both are made from the same grade of wheat. All that has been shown is that the bran or coarse part of the brown bread is not digested, but passes along the track practically unchanged. The bran is valuable not because it is digestible. Its value (aside from the salts it contains) lies in the fact that it is “roughage” which prevents the contents of the digestive track from adhering to its walls or from forming into dry and hard masses, resulting in so-called constipation.

That the bran has a value as roughage is evident from the fact that bran is now frequently prescribed by physicians. Crackers and breads made chiefly of bran are extensively sold and used as a corrective for the conditions named above.

The only valid argument in favor of white flour as against graham is that it lends itself far better to present day commercial and milling conditions. It keeps better because the germ of the wheat has been removed. It is the wheat germ that makes graham flour an unsatisfactory article of commerce.

Professor Wood does not deny that the wheat germ has food value—he merely denies that it has any but that represented by the protein and energy producing elements. Surely these are worth saving.

The germ is the most alive part of the grain and it is well established that the nearer to life the food is the better it is as food. It is also true that the more perishable it is the more important that it be consumed without delay. These qualities are good for man, bad for commerce. The real reason why white flour and white bread are sold and consumed is that there are milling interests; commercial reasons which control. We have forgotten that mills and commerce exist for the sake of man and not man for the sake of the milling and commercial interests. If the mill were brought nearer the bakershop and the bakershop nearer the consumer a graham loaf could be made and baked thoroughly that would have such a nutty taste and appetizing flavor that it would win its way to popular favor and prove a potent help in those processes of stomach and bowel movements which are so necessary to the welfare of human life. When the “staff of life” is restored to its proper place in our dietary it probably will contain all that is packed up in those precious packages called “grains,” including the bran and the germ.

THE FLOUR BIN

I was a young housekeeper for several years before it dawned on my consciousness that flour spoils sooner or later just as do all other grain foods. Then I bethought myself of the necessity for scalding out the tin flour bin whenever emptied before putting in a new supply. When you realize that the flour in the bottom (if not entirely emptied each time) may be very old indeed, you see the need for a complete cleansing between purchases.