CHAPTER IX

WHERE IS THE FOOD OF THE WORLD?

If people have not proper food they soon grow thin. This is because the fat stored up in their bodies is being used up to feed them. They can live on it for some time, just as a bear is nourished by the fat in his body during his long winter's sleep; but by and by, even before the fat gives out, the protein is called upon. By this time the person is not far from the point of starvation.

Before the war most of the world got on fairly well for food. Occasionally there was a famine in one country or another, but other countries sent ships of provisions or money to buy provisions. In those days provisions could always be bought somewhere.

Why is the condition of things so different now? Where are the grain, the meat, the fish, the fats, and the sugar that used to supply Europe? If a country can raise the money, why can it not buy what it needs?
One answer to these questions is that there is actually less food in the world; for millions of men who used to produce it were called into the armies or to work on munitions, so that less food has been raised. Another answer is that the ground on the Continent which has been fought over is now unfit for agriculture. Still another is that few countries, if any, are in the habit of supplying all their own food, and if they are shut off from their usual places of buying, they are as much at a loss as we should be if all the provision stores should suddenly disappear. In some of these countries the people have been so busy manufacturing that they found it cheaper and easier to import food than to raise it. In others there are so many people in proportion to the area that sufficient land to raise what they required could not be spared. Often the soil or the climate is not adapted to produce what is needed.

Then, too, there is the question of fertilizers. In Europe the soil has been cultivated for centuries. It will no longer do well without fertilizers. The nitrates, which are used in fertilizers, are found chiefly in Chile, and these could not be imported during the war. Work animals have been seized by the contending armies or killed because there was no feed for them. As a result of all this, France has raised less than half of the wheat that she needs for her people. Poor Belgium has almost no wheat, and Italy only a part of what she needs. Though England has increased her production, she has raised only one-fourth enough to supply her people.
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Even before the war, Austria-Hungary raised only enough wheat for herself, and had little for her neighbors. As for Germany, she imported part of her wheat, and even what she has looted from the lands that she has overrun has not been as much as she requires. Then, too, the crops in these two countries have not been up to the usual mark.

Before the war England, Ireland, France, Italy, and Belgium imported 750,000,000 bushels of wheat in the course of a year. Russia and Roumania were near at hand, both of them fine wheat countries, and a large quantity came from them. But Roumania was overrun by the Germans, her farm-lands were ruined, and she has no wheat or any other food to send to any country, or even to break the famine within her own boundaries.

During the war Turkey closed the Bosphorus; that is, she allowed no ships to pass save those of Germany and Austria, and therefore no wheat could in any case be brought from Russia to the Allies. Russia is in a turmoil; the once fertile Ukraine has been in the hands of the Germans; but even if the whole country were united, many of her own people would still be hungry, for there is no way to carry food from one part of the country to another. Russia in Europe is one-fourth larger than all the rest of the Continent. She has millions of acres of the best wheat land in the world, but few railroads. However, if the whole land were criss-crossed with railroads, they would be of little use be-
cause of the lack of coal. Russia's best coal is mined in the extreme south or in Poland, which only the close of the war released from the hands of the Germans.

Australia and India had hundreds of millions of bushels of wheat. Argentina can usually export part of hers to Europe, but her 1917 crop was not so good as usual. Moreover, it is a long way from Australia and India to Europe, and not so very much nearer from Argentina, and during the war the ships were needed to transport soldiers. A ship could transport a good many soldiers from the United States across the Atlantic in the time that it would take to make a voyage from Australia to England.

The Allies in Europe are lacking meat, for they have lost many of their cattle. One reason is that in the great need of meat, cattle have been slaughtered and used as food. Sometimes this was done because there was no one to care for them. Men who are fighting in the trenches cannot come home at night to milk the cows and feed them. Another reason is because much land that has been used for pasture has now been ploughed up in the effort to raise more grain for the people. Even before the war much fodder was imported, and now many cattle have had to be killed for the lack of food. In Belgium and northern France the invading Germans either killed the cattle or drove them to Germany. Australia and South America would have been glad to send more beef and mutton, if there had only been some way of providing ships. The
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United States and Canada have been sending both meat and wheat to the extent of their ability.

To lose cattle is of course a great misfortune for grown folk, but it is particularly bad for the children, since milk is the food that they especially need, as it gives them protein, sugar, fats, lime, and other mineral matter, and both kinds of vitamins in abundance. A pint of milk contains as much protein as two eggs, as much fat as an ordinary serving of butter, and even more sugar than fat. It also contains lime enough for one day.

If more fish could be obtained and if people were willing to try new kinds, it would in some degree take the place of meat. Fish contains considerable protein, sometimes as much as 22 per cent., and some kinds, such as shad, mackerel, and herring, contain as much fat as is in some cuts of meat, such as lean round steak. The waters about England are swarming with fish, but the country’s supply is less than half the usual quantity. One reason is that nearly all of her steam fishing vessels have been taken over by the Navy, and the fishermen of military age have been in service. Another reason is that the North Sea has been so full of mines that it was almost as dangerous as a battlefield; and still another is that the Germans were just as ready to sink a tiny fishing craft—even one belonging to a neutral country—as a large ship. It is estimated that during the first years of the war, about one-tenth of the food sent to the Allies was destroyed by submarines. If
Kipling should write another "Captains Courageous," he might tell a thrilling story indeed.

Pork is needed in Europe even more than beef. The humble pig can no longer be despised, for he has become a highly valued member of society. Pigs are easy to raise. They are not particular about climate, and as for food, they will eat almost anything they can get—indeed, the people who eat the pig are really more particular about his food than the pig himself is, for of course the nature of his diet affects the quality of the pork, and in this matter the pig has no concern.

An interesting question has arisen in regard to keeping pigs and cattle, namely, whether it is better to eat the grain ourselves or to give it to these animals and then eat them. Protein is valuable, and the pig, for instance, does not give back in the form of pork nearly so much protein as was in the grain that he ate; that is, the pig is not an economical machine for turning grain into meat, and cattle are still less efficient. On the other hand, in ordinary times more grain is raised than is needed for human food. Moreover, pigs are not fed on grain alone, but in large part on food that would not be eaten by people.

Another point in favor of pork is that it contains much fat, and all the world is in pressing need of fat. Here the question of shipping comes in. Even if a pig is not an economical machine for making pork, he is the only variety of machine for that purpose yet discovered, and pork is an economical food to send
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across the ocean. When economy in shipping is to be considered, we must remember that one hundred pounds of pork will take much less tonnage than would be needed to carry the fodder to raise the hundred pounds. After all, pigs really do their best for us. Fat, as has been said before, provides energy; and fried food, even when it does not “soak fat,” contains a great deal. A doughnut contains from 20 per cent. to 30 per cent. of fat. The doughnuts that the lassies of the Salvation Army fry for the soldiers must be remembered with respect, for they have helped to fight our battles.

Sugar is a good food to send, for it is concentrated and takes little space, and if it does not get wet it will keep indefinitely. Before the war there was a “middle Europe” of sugar beet raising—Belgium, northern France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and part of Russia—which raised more than nine-tenths of the beet sugar of the world, and England bought more than half her supply from this source. France all during the war has continued to produce some sugar, but she has been able to raise only about one-fourth of what she generally needs. Java has been ready to furnish sugar and would gladly furnish it to-day, for she has a large supply on hand; but, as in the case of Australia, the lack of ships has made it impossible to get the sugar from there. As soon as ships are available Java will send it to these countries. France and England and Italy have done their best and will never
cease to do their best, but they need food and must have it.

A little girl once listened to her mother reading a pitiful story from a paper. As the mother was turning the page, the little girl asked earnestly, “But mother, what are you going to do about it?”

*It is worth remembering:*

That one who is not well nourished cannot do his work.

That there is less food than usual in the world. That the world demands far greater supplies of food from us than were needed while many peoples were cut off from help by the battle lines.