

AMONG BRITISH IMPORTERS.

Butter Packages.

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LETTER NO. IX.

The British importers, while agreed on most points, showed some difference of opinion on the subject of butter packages. As many of my readers know, our export package is mainly what has been called the Welsh tub. It is wider at the top than at the bottom with a somewhat loose-fitting cover, usually fastened down by strips of tin. The sizes range from a 25 to 70 pounds capacity. It is a stave tub. It is generally manufactured now by machinery, and may be procured at a low price at almost any country store. Within a year or two there has been placed on the market, and used in export trade, a tub of the above description, provided with the inside lining of tin, the whole called a "tin-lined tub." The Danish package is a cask or barrel, with both ends headed in the usual manner. It is also made by machinery is light and clean-looking, and will hold about 100 pounds.

Several of the importers in Bristol considered

OUR BUTTER PACKAGE FAULTY.

Mr. Clark said: "The present tubs are simply ridiculous. The joints open, staves get loose, the tins break off, and the cover is poor. These packages are faulty generally. The butter oozes out, and around the edge, or where it touches the wood, it gets 'sided,' or strong tasting." Mr. Iles also said that butter suffered from "contact with the wood." Mr. Clarke spoke of the tin boxes which came into the market, and said they were a favorite package: but the objection to them was their expense, and the fact that the butter could not easily be taken out to "tare" it. He would prefer the tin-lined tubs. These allow the butter to come out easily, to be "tared" or "stripped," but he thought their cost was an objection. Mr. Iles had less preference for tin-lined tubs, their extra cost also being his main objection. If they were to be used at all, however, he would like to have them used together. He thought it a mistake to have various sorts of packages in market containing one brand of butter. When he offered butter in both packages, the argument which justified the use of the tin-lining necessarily condemned the use of the wooden tub without the lining. As a dealer, he had actually experienced this difficulty of satisfying buyers that either of both packages were good! Here, certainly, is another argument for uniformity all through in dairy matters. I may say here that what little experience I have had with the tin-lined package goes in its favor. While cheapness may be essential in the package of the future, I would advise the dairymen not to allow a little extra cost to stand in the way of his buying the best package in the market. Mr. Clark advocated the adoption of the Danish package, the cask or barrel, but of a somewhat smaller size, say holding 70 to 80 pounds instead of 100 lbs. I am glad, however, to quote Mr. Price, who had

A GOOD WORD FOR CANADIAN TUBS.

He was much pleased with them. They could not be rolled like the Danish casks, and so had to be lifted. This fact saved the outside, in some measure, from contact with dirt. His experience led him to believe that these packages had been received by importers in England, fairly clean on the outside. He believed that the dirty appearance of Canadian tubs was largely due to the effect of long storage. He claimed that Danish casks had never been tested by storage, and believed if they were they would show a much dirtier appearance than the Canadian tubs do. There is much force in this statement, and its teaching should not be lost sight of. In making a comparison between Danish and Canadian packages, we must remember the different conditions under which they have been tested. The Danish butter transportation is of comparatively short distance and of continuous movement, shipments being made almost daily. The handlers engaged in this trade are completely familiarized with its needs. Again, it may be that the brine is used in one case and not in the other. The brine though it may serve to protect the butter, soaks into the wood package, and through to the outside, giving the later, after some weeks of storage, a dirty appearance. All this goes to prove

OUR PACKAGE ONE CAUSE OF FAILURE.

Our competitors have adopted a package which, though it may not be intrinsically a better one than our own, is better suited to the conditions of their trade than is ours to the conditions of our trade.

Some suggestions were offered by these experienced dealers. Mr. Iles suggested the use of cloth to surround the butter in the package. Cloth would be a great protection and it was not expensive—much less than tin. Cloth always had a certain value to the buyer, either grocer or consumer. I may add that I found the use of cloth for protecting butter in connection with different styles of packing, growing in favor everywhere, and it may be strongly recommended. Mr. Iles thought, too, that there would be an advantage in keeping a little pickle around the butter. "It would help to destroy the rancid flavor of butter kept in transit."

Mr. Price asks that butter be packed and invoiced in a way that each package will more evenly

HOLD OUT ITS WEIGHT.

In his experience some tubs are over weight and some under weight. Even though a shipment may contain, in the aggregate, a full weight of invoice, the importer may suffer loss when he disposes of butter in divided lots. He cannot charge the average weight to his customers, for those who get the excess weight say nothing, while those who are short weight insist on the weight being made up. He is also advised, for butter packages

STANDARD NET WEIGHTS.

It would be much easier to invoice them. The desirable sizes suggested were: For creamery, 70 lbs.; for dairy, 70.56 and 36 lbs. Mr. Iles also suggested tubs of uniform sizes and standard net weights. Creamery he would make 60 or 70 lbs. and dairy a range of 30 to 60 lbs. The standard weights proposed by Mr. Price appear to me to be better adapted to the usages of the country.

THE SORT OF PACKAGE NEEDED

for our butter trade is a most important consideration. The choice probably lies between our present package and the Danish cask. If it were settled that our present package cannot, or will not, be improved in its construction, one would be almost tempted to decide, offhand, upon the adoption of the Danish package. But were our own package to be improved in every respect wherein it is now defective, there is no doubt that it should be retained. The first argument in favor of retaining our own package is (a) the fact that it is the package already in use. It is easier to improve what we have than to revolutionize and introduce a substitute completely new. Our manufacturers are in the field equipped for making the present firkin. It would be a pity, and not in the interest of dairymen, to unnecessarily depreciate the plant of the manufacturer who supplies him with requisites, and who is, therefore, his friend. It were well and reasonable, however, to ask the manufacturer to take heed to the needs of his patrons, and to perfect his goods to the highest degree. The second argument (b) is the advantage (if ever we do happily make for ourselves a reputation abroad for our butter) of having a package distinctively our own. Such a package may ultimately be imitated; but that would not be ill fortune, for one must needs be ahead to be followed.

Now, the Danish form of package seems especially adapted for heavy weights—the Canadian form to light weights. Possibly then, it would be well to

ADOPT BOTH PACKAGES.

For creamery purposes, a cask containing 100 lbs. butter would be convenient, and it would suit the English market. To adopt this package would be to follow our old record. A Liverpool firm told me that eight or ten years ago, Kamouraska butter was put into 100 pound casks, called "Goschens." This butter, by the way, had a high reputation for keeping quality, and was sometimes set aside because of this quality, for spring needs. The butter was highly salted; but it is likely that the package had most of all to do with the long keeping of the butter. These old-time packages, if I am rightly informed, came into disuse, because of the difficulty of "taring" the butter, and because of fraudulent practices such as giving overweight of package and underweight of butter. All such difficulty might be duly provided against, under a proper supervision of our butter interests.

THE PREJUDICES OF BUYERS

and of consumers is a factor not to be disregarded. The popularity of a Normandy fresh butter package—a small box—will often sell other butter that would be refused in other shape. Mr. Clarke, however, thinks that at the present time, there are not any weighty prejudices in the market strong enough to bear against the adoption of any particular package. What prejudice does exist he would expect it to work in favor of the Danish cask (in which some of the margarine also is put up.)

SOME ESSENTIALS OF A BUTTER PACKAGE.

Of first importance is the material used in manufacture. Spruce is the wood now used most extensively, and it is good. Balsam might be even preferable, but it is not always available. There is no objection to soft wood, it is easily manufactured, and it makes a light and cheap tub. But it is necessary and of first importance that the wood be free from sap if it be used without artificial treatment or coating. I have understood that the Vermont manufacturers are very careful to select the lumber used and to exclude any staves containing sap. I fear that some, at least, of our manufacturers have not been wise enough to follow this example. The "bluey" butter referred to by the Bristol dealer was very likely due to sap in the wood. Our perfected package should be made to hold brine perfectly. One of the Bristol importers advised keeping brine around the butter in transit, and the "Goschens" referred to contained brine which kept the butter from contact with the air. Now, if our package were of material impervious to brine and had a brine-tight cover, the butter would be in a better condition, whether it were actually surrounded by brine or not. When brine is used it would be prevented from soaking through to the outside, not only wasting itself but discoloring the package and giving it a dirty appearance.

THE RESOURCES OF SCIENCE AND INVENTION have made it possible for our manufacturers to give us packages answering the essential conditions, but the enterprise of those interested, of both dealers and manufacturers, seems not to have been equal to the need, and a package perfected in these points has yet to be placed on the market, or, at least, to be introduced into trade our system.

In freely giving above suggestions of others as well as my own, I do not expect to have covered the whole ground or to have settled the question. As the reader will see, before I am done I anticipate the necessity of more than suggestions or opinions, of one or of many, to determine what is best. Actual experiment in practical lines will be necessary here as in other directions to the attainment of success. Of experimental work I shall have something to say in a future letter touching continental methods.

W. H. LYNCH.

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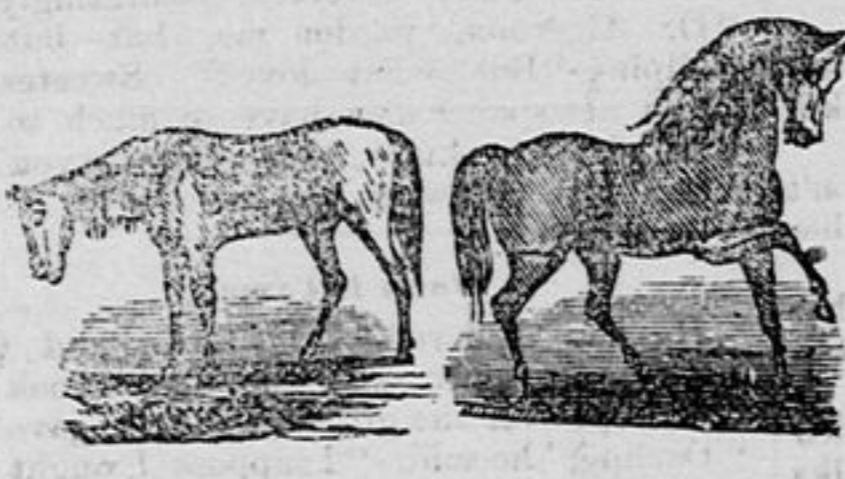
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