

THE LIQUID EGG TRADE

Perturbation among Home Interests

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.

London, Mar. 19.

The liquid egg trade which mainly comes from China is fearfully perturbed, owing to the intention of the Government to legislate against preservatives in food. The Bakery Allied Traders' Association has issued an impassioned shriek to all Members of Parliament, from which I take the following passages:—

The Departmental Committee have proposed to wipe out our business at one fell swoop. This is a proposal which is not only unjust to us as a trade, but very damaging to the interests of bakers throughout the country and also of the public who consume their products.

Preserved liquid eggs have been imported into this country for over 20 years; the trade was mainly carried on by Germany, but during the war it developed largely in England, to the great advantage of the country. During the last three or four years the average annual imports of yolks and albumen have reached in value a total of three and a half million pounds sterling. The trade done in connexion with this business is equivalent to well over 900,000,000 eggs per annum.

Small Sponge Cakes

In deference to the opinion of the Departmental Committee that something ought to be done to prevent preserved eggs being used in small sponge cakes which are likely to be part of the diet of infants or invalids, the Association representing the liquid egg trade entered into an arrangement with the Ministry of Health in March, 1923, that they would sell their preserved eggs only upon an express agreement that they should not be used in the manufacture of small sponge cakes. This undertaking has been loyally carried out by the Association, and it is a hard proposition that a business which of its own free will made proposals acceptable to the Department under these conditions less than two years ago, should now be destroyed under the authority of the same Department. If deprived of the use of preservatives, the cost of shell eggs and of cold storage eggs will go up enormously, with the result that the cost of cakes will be increased.

A large firm of cake makers in Birmingham say that if compelled to use frozen yolks it would mean an extra cost of £34,000 per annum, which would have to be passed on to the consumer. Cakes would cost on an average 53 per cent. more than those made with liquid eggs. The cost of importing frozen eggs, owing to the heavier freight, would also be higher, and the increase would have to be met by the consumer.

Cold Storage Eggs

Eggs which have been kept in cold storage go wrong rapidly after they have been thawed out. For this reason small traders cannot possibly make use of them, as there is no provision for cold storage in the majority of country towns and villages or on the railways sufficient to make it a practical proposition. The frozen egg trade in China is to a great extent under the control of one interest, which also controls a large fleet of refrigerating steamers and owns or controls the majority of the cold stores throughout Europe, and in many towns in this country it is impossible to secure cold storage excepting in their stores.