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THE AGRONOMIST'S PART IN THE WORLD'S FOOD SUPPLY¹

THE welfare of mankind is intimately bound up with the world's food supply. Not that man can "live by bread alone," but he is unable to devote himself to the higher phases of an advancing civilization if he is conscious of the gnawings of hunger. Since the shortage in various food products during the war, people generally have taken a much keener interest in the whole question of food supply. The old statement that "we never miss the water till the well runs dry" is here exemplified. So long as the grocer had plenty of flour and sugar most people considered the supply in much the same way as they considered the supply of air. The only worry was to find money with which to purchase needed articles.

When it became necessary to go to a dozen stores before being able to buy any sugar, and then only a pound or two; when the meat allowance was restricted; and when white flour had to be supplemented by all kinds of substitutes—then people began to realize that the supply of food might not be inexhaustible.

The shortage of food during the war has been a good lesson for the people of the United States. It has taught them what some of the peoples of Asia have been so often forced by famine to realize, namely, that food can be had only when a supply is available, and that this supply may at times be far short of actual needs. Conditions during the war were of course unusual; we hope they will never recur. I do not at this time desire to consider the food shortage due to the war but rather the whole food situation as it is likely to affect mankind in the future as the

¹ Address of the president of the American Society of Agronomy, Springfield, Mass., October 18, 1920.

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