

OIL & FAT INDUSTRIES

The Editor's Page

A Menace to Oil Crushing

A SERIOUS menace to crushers and refiners of vegetable and animal oils the world over has come up out of the Antarctic seas in the form of a huge overproduction of whale oil.

The quick profits gained from Antarctic whaling operations have caused the organization of whaling companies, in Norway particularly, to be carried beyond all bounds. The speculation in whaling shares in Oslo, Bergen and Stavanger nine months ago gave rise to reminiscence of the Mississippi bubble, the London rubber flotations and other similar get-rich-quick frenzies which have seized entire nations in the past. Fear that the whales would soon be exterminated was felt throughout the world of consumers of fats.

Events have seemed to rout such fears. The many whalers operating in the Antarctic field during the past season have gathered the record haul of over four million barrels of oil, and report the presence of the whales in greater abundance than ever before.

The whaling shareholders, however, need not expect a continuation of huge profits from their ventures, their aim having been defeated by the very extent of the operating success. Whale oil is appearing in the fat-consuming centers in such abundance that the surplus is failing to find ready buyers at any price.

Therein lies a distinct menace to the success of all crushers of vegetable oils and producers of tallows and greases. The large consumers have rejected the surplus whale oil. It is inconceivable that the owners of the whaling enterprises will do other than transport that surplus to convenient places for storage and persist in offering it to all and sundry buyers at prices which will make all other oil look expensive in comparison. The oil, when hydrogenated, is suitable for shortening or margarine purposes, so that it can enter into competition with practically any grade of fat.

American oil crushers are fortunate in that the Tariff affords them some measure of protection against this million barrels of whale oil which must eventually be absorbed by the world's markets. The excess is, however, going

to strike a blow at the heart of oil crushing the world over. The virtually complete suspension of whaling next season is undoubtedly the only thing which will prevent it from being a death blow.

Science—Pure or “Commercial”?

THOSE who are devoting, or planning to devote their lives to the chemistry of foods and food products should pause, at this juncture, to consider well whether they are willing to persist in the combat against modern prejudices which are apparently as deepseated as those of medieval times.

There are apparently just two avenues of endeavor open to the chemist who would specialize in food work. He may become a “nutrition specialist” and under the paternal ægis of some food producer or manufacturer, or of some group, he will promptly discover that the only road to health for the human race is paved, parked and graded with the particular food of his backers, be that food milk, honey, bread, meat or psyllium seed.

If, on the other hand, scorning the leash of such guidance, he ventures along the flowered path of originality and dares to discover new and wholesome foods or new uses for known products, he immediately becomes, in the eyes of the “things-as-they-are” crowd, a charlatan, a champion of substitutes, a fraud, one who would stunt the growth of the nation's children, a mountebank. In short, no designation is severe enough for one who threatens *their* monopoly.

It is our belief that such an attitude toward progress will stifle initiative. Many a gift of value will be lost to the world because young chemists starting their careers will deliberately choose the avenue of commendation rather than that of vituperation.

We of this age look back upon the dark ages when witches were burned and scolds were ducked, and remark complacently, “How narrow-minded they were in those days”. *We* wonder what will be the comment of the historians of three hundred years hence upon the “broadmindedness” of our age toward scientific achievement, pure or “commercial.”