



Foods In Packets

(Written for "The Listener" by DR. MURIEL BELL,
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IN our last article, we touched on the question of additional expense of tinned and packeted foods. Here are some figures illustrating the difference in the case of breakfast foods—the cost per lb. ranges from 4d for plain oatmeal up to 2/1 for some of the highly-processed ready-to-eat breakfast foods which, incidentally, have lost practically all their vitamin B1 during the course of their manufacture. To understand the reason for this loss, we need to know that, as with the tinning of meat, raising the temperature above boiling point destroys vitamin B1, so also is it with cereals. The length of time for which the high temperature acts is also a factor. Thus, in making ordinary oatmeal, a certain amount of heat for a short time is necessary in order to make it easier to remove the outer husk. To make rolled oats, heat is applied for a short time. The products are, however, usually still rich in vitamin B1 after these processes. Nor is there any significant loss during the boiling necessary in making porridge. The losses in making bread are similarly small, because the interior of the loaf does not go above boiling point; the crust, however, loses more. But if the cereal grain is so treated as to swell it, or if it is rolled flat and then browned in an oven, the loss becomes serious.

Strangely enough, we hear of demands being made by working men for some of these more expensive foods. Their choice would be less disturbing and paradoxical

if it were not for the additional fact that the harder the work the more of these vitamin B factors they require.

In defence of breakfast foods in packets we must, however, say that some of them have very high vitamin B1 content—even some of those that cook quite quickly. Unfortunately, no trade names can be mentioned in such an article as this. That is one reason why it seems desirable to have an analysis set forth on the packet.

Another point that must be conceded in favour of packeted cereals is that there is much less likelihood of their being contaminated by weevils or other vermin.

Still another is that occasionally people who have an allergy to plain oatmeal or plain wheat products can get along quite well with foods that have had their protein altered by raising it to a high temperature. Thus it comes about that doctors frequently advise a patient to try the effect of ready-to-eat breakfast foods—in certain cases of asthma, eczema, nasal catarrh, colitis, etc. It should be remembered, however, that these foods lack the vitamin B1 present in plain products. But for ordinary everyday use for the great majority of us the plain foods are best.

In regard to tinned foods, a point that we should bear in mind is that occasionally the housewife has bad luck with her preserving, and tinned foods then turn out less expensive than one's own home preserves. It is only when an unusually resistant organism is present

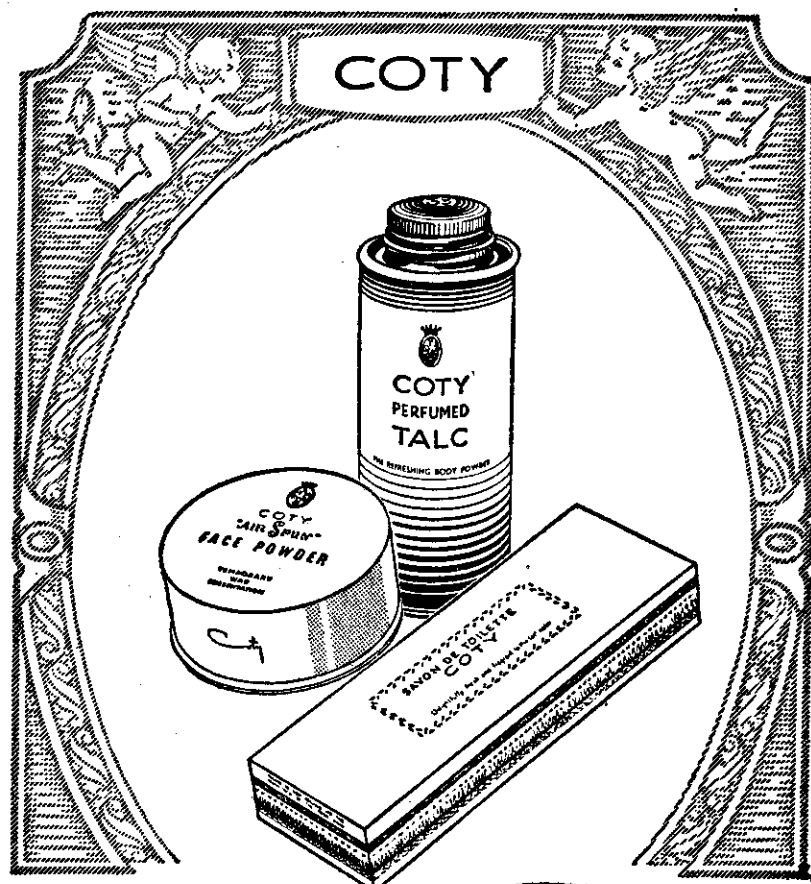
that such an accident happens. Most of us get success with bottling tomatoes by the six-to-ten-minute boiling open-kettle method. Occasionally an organism is present which requires a longer heating period to destroy it. Thus you will notice a slight change in the directions given in the new edition of "Good Nutrition."



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are a little slap-dash—not as well thought out as the others, not as accurate, and not as well written; but both subjects are seen from the same useful standpoint. But if a hundred years is a short period relatively, it is what Professor Wood's American readers would call a mighty long period actually; a million-and-a-half people have a million-and-a-half moods and reactions; and it is a quite horrible situation for an author to be separated from his printers by eight or nine thousand miles.

—O.D.

NORTH AFRICA

RETURN TO THE ATTACK: The New Zealand Division in Action in Libya. Published by the Army Board, Wellington.

THE ARMY AT WAR: Tunisia. Prepared for the War Office by the Ministry of Information.

THE first of these publications is the fourth number in the series of illustrated surveys of the campaigns of the Second N.Z.E.F. The return was to Cyrenaica; and the savage fighting round Sidi Rezegh and Tobruk is vividly (and no doubt accurately) described. But it is not an easy story to follow. The fighting did not go according to plan—our own or the enemy's. The offensive which began on the frontier on November 18 carried the Division into Tobruk on November 27, but Rommel raided its lines of communication, overran a Brigade headquarters, cut the Tobruk corridor which it was the Division's task to keep open, captured Sidi Rezegh,

and compelled the Division to seek safety by disengaging to the south. It looked like defeat; but since desert campaigns are necessarily fluid, and it is sometimes more profitable to destroy enemy forces than to carry or hold enemy positions, the situation was better in fact than it appeared on the map.

It would be wrong to say that this is not a tempting book to look at. The cover is not attractive, back or front, and the frontispiece portrait of General Auchinleck has been spoiled by an attempt to add colour. But there are good maps and diagrams inside, and the text is profusely illustrated with well chosen and well placed, if not always well reproduced, photographs.

Tunisia is a foolscap publication of 60 pages lit up with magnificent illustrations. The letterpress would have been more interesting if there had been a question occasionally or a note of criticism, but it is a laudation and not a history. It is after all true, as the Ministry of Information points out, that "the military historian has seldom been in a position to record a victory so complete and brilliant."

Yet, to begin with, everything was against the Allies—distance, bases, communications, air support. At least a third of their troops lacked battle experience. And yet, after the early struggles for position and to build up supplies, the campaign raced ahead to its spectacular triumph. This is the story—with 12 maps and about 100 front-rank photographs.