

“We Don’t Want Any German Sausages Here!” Food, Fear, and the German Nation in Victorian and Edwardian Britain

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Abstract This essay brings together aspects of the history of science, food, and culture, and applies them to the study of Anglo-German relations and perceptions by examining how between 1850 and 1914 the German sausage was used as a metaphor for the German nation. The essay shows how the concerns that became attached to German sausages not only provide a way of understanding Britain’s interaction with Germany but also reveal further dimensions to popular anti-German sentiment. Alarm about what went into German sausages formed part of a growing strand of popular opposition to Germany, which drew on increasing insecurity about Britain’s position on the world stage and the perceived economic threat that Germany and German immigrants presented. Such sentiment was translated into how Germans were caricatured and onto material objects—in this case, the “deadly mysteries” that were feared to go into German sausages. Cultural and gastronomic stereotypes overlapped in a discourse that linked Germany and Germans to their national diet and aggressive nature, as well as associated German sausages with fears about diseased meat, adulteration, and the risks that eating them entailed. The result was that the German sausage was used as a staple for satirical comic representations of Germany, as representative of dishonesty in food production, and as a xenophobic slur. Around the German sausage, anti-German sentiment and questions of food safety merged and became mutually reinforcing.

In the opening weeks of the First World War, German immigrants in Britain faced a series of isolated attacks, mostly focused on German retailers. At the end of August 1914, a more serious disturbance broke out in Keighley, Yorkshire, which resulted in attacks on four German butcher shops.¹ Throughout 1914 and 1915, German butchers in London, Crewe, and elsewhere became targets of anti-German violence. Attacks reached a peak in 1915, as the Germanophobic hysteria that broke out following the sinking of the *Lusitania* led to riots across Britain. In many cases, violence and property damage focused initially on German butchers because both German food manufacturers and German food offered a visible symbol of Germany and German influences on

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¹ *Manchester Guardian*, 31 August 1914.

Britain.² In the following year, the *Daily Mail* explained how certain restaurants had renamed various national dishes so that the “Vienna steak” became the “Belgian steak” and the “German sausage” the “English sausage,” and by 1917, German barrage balloons were being widely referred to as German sausage balloons.³ War with Germany provided a potent context for Germanophobia, but attacks on German butchers need to be placed within a longer chronology of popular anti-German sentiments, representations of the German nation, and growing fears about the dangers contained within German meat products.

While the use of foodstuffs as signals of national identity has a long history, in the nineteenth century connections between food and nation became more prominent as certain national foodstuffs became associated with the spread of disease. Mid-Victorian debates on tea adulteration focused on “dirty Chinamen,” Italian ice cream was linked to outbreaks of typhoid, and between 1879 and 1881, Italy, Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, Turkey, and Greece imposed restrictions on the importation of American pork and pork products ostensibly because of concerns about high levels of trichinosis and the risk to human health.⁴ Concerns about national foodstuffs and disease need to be seen in the context of growing fears about food quality and safety, but by the 1880s, the danger of eating meat from diseased livestock was arousing particular expert and public alarm.⁵ In these debates, sausages were believed to present the gravest threat to health from diseased meat, and fears about the hazardous nature of sausages became emblematic of many of the issues that came to surround Victorian and Edwardian concerns about the risks associated with eating putrid meat or meat from diseased livestock.⁶ However, while all types of sausages were increasingly viewed with suspicion, not all sausages aroused identical fears. In newspapers reports, medical journals, and court cases, German sausages were singled out as more prone to harboring putrid or diseased meat and for spreading more disease than any other meat product. Although this is not to suggest that anxieties about national foodstuffs and disease centered solely on Germany or the German sausage, concern went beyond German sausages as “unfit for human consumption,” as they came to be used metaphorically in expressions of Britain’s ongoing love-hate relationship with Germany. If cultural and intellectual interactions between Britain and Germany influenced several generations of Britons, ideas that Anglo-German friendship in the nineteenth century was replaced by Anglo-German antagonism after 1900 is oversimplistic, and these ideas conceal a strand of popular anti-German sentiment that reflected ignorance, misunderstanding, and

² P. Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst: Germans in Britain during the First World War* (Oxford, 1991), 223–53; P. Panayi, “Anti-German Riots in Britain during the First World War,” in *Racial Violence in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. P. Panayi (Leicester, 1996), 65–66.

³ *Daily Mail*, 4 February 1916, 10; H. G. Wells, *Italy, France and Britain at War* (New York, 1917).

⁴ *Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health* 20 (1899): 582–87; E. Rappaport, “Packaging China: Foreign Articles and Dangerous Tastes in the Mid-Victorian Tea Party,” in *The Making of the Consumer: Knowledge, Power and Identity in the Modern World*, ed. F. Trentmann (Oxford, 2006), 125–46; L. L. Snyder, “The American-German Pork Dispute, 1879–1891,” *Journal of Modern History* 17 (1945): 16–28.

⁵ For a full discussion, see K. Waddington, *The Bovine Scourge: Meat, Tuberculosis and Public Health, 1850–1914* (Woodford, 2006).

⁶ See K. Waddington, “The Dangerous Sausage: Diet, Meat and Disease in Victorian and Edwardian Britain,” *Cultural and Social History* 8 (2011): 51–71, which examines the qualitative dimension of working-class diets.

growing fears of competition.⁷ Between 1850 and the First World War, German sausages were used in these expressions of anti-German sentiment as apprehension about Germany and German immigrants merged with anxieties about food and disease.

As historians have become increasingly sensitive to questions of material culture and the cultural construction of food, they have concluded that food is not something simply to be used to measure standards of living.⁸ Scholarship has moved away from studies preoccupied with consumption in terms of goods purchased to examine things—often the “soft” objects of consumption, like food—as bearers of meanings in the larger context of home, nation, and empire. This approach is adopted in this essay.⁹ As anthropologists have shown, food, particularly meat, was laden with a variety of meanings. In *Spicing up Britain*, Panikos Panayi drew on the theory of the imagined or constructed nation and on work on immigrant groups and food in the United States to explore how food provided a focus for a sense of national identity.¹⁰ Indeed, food was equally used to confer identities on different national and immigrant groups—from the German sausage and the Spanish onion to the Roast Beef of Old England—in a form of culinary and “gastro-nationalism.” As Ben Rogers explains in his *Beef and Liberty*, “[A]fter language, food is the most important bearer of national identity,” and this is particularly true of meat and meat products.¹¹ While it is important not to overstate the connections among food, national identity, and national stereotypes, Victorian and Edwardian cookbooks noted how specific foods reflected the character of those nations who produced them.¹² National meat dishes and foodstuffs were used as symbols in broader nationalist discourses, but they also acted as a “potent source of xenophobia” that filtered national stereotypes, as demonstrated by Erika Rappaport’s study of mid-Victorian fears surrounding Chinese green tea.¹³ By building on a literature that examines the symbolic nature of consumption and how material objects confer identities, as well as on cultural histories of Anglo-German attitudes, this essay brings together aspects of the history of science, food, and culture to show how the symbolic and physical attributes of the German sausage reflected and informed British perceptions of Germans and Germany.¹⁴

⁷ P. Major, “Britain and Germany: A Love-Hate Relationship?” *German History* 26 (2008): 457; F. L. Müller, *Britain and the German Question: Perceptions of Nationalism and Political Reform* (Basingstoke, 2002). On anti-German sentiment and attacks on Germans in Britain, see the excellent studies by Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst* and “Anti-German Riots in Britain,” 65–66.

⁸ On the standard of living debate, see C. H. Feinstein, “Pessimism Perpetuated: Real Wages and the Standard of Living in Britain During and After the Industrial Revolution,” *Journal of Economic History* 93 (1998): 625–58.

⁹ See J. Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual and Symbol in England, 1790–1850* (Oxford, 1994); F. Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation: Commerce, Consumption and Civil Society in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2008).

¹⁰ P. Panayi, *Spicing Up Britain: The Multicultural History of British History* (London, 2008), 12–13.

¹¹ B. Rogers, *Beef and Liberty: Roast Beef, John Bull and the English Nation* (London, 2003), 5–6.

¹² See R. H. Christie, *Banquets of the Nations: Eighty-six Dinners Characteristic and Typical of Its Own Country* (Edinburgh, 1911), v–xxiv; Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Philosophy of Taste* (London, 1994), 13.

¹³ Rogers, *Beef and Liberty*, 5–6; Rappaport, “Packaging China,” 125–46.

¹⁴ See L. Auslander, “Beyond Words,” *American Historical Review* 110 (2005): 1015–45; A. Warde, “Consumption and Theories of Practice,” *Journal of Consumer Culture* 5 (2005): 131–53; F. Trentmann, “Citizenship and Consumption,” *Journal of Consumer Culture* 7 (2007): 154–55.

British attitudes toward Germany in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were complex and often ambiguous, while feelings toward German immigrants were further informed by an anti-alien mentality and fears of competition.¹⁵ Part of the complexity surrounding attitudes toward Germany and German immigrants were the connections established after 1850 between food and disease, and a popular strand of anti-German sentiment. Although German sausages were not the only national foodstuffs to be associated with disease and the dietary practices of other nations, notably the French, were criticized, German sausages became bundles of ingredients that acquired “bundles of meaning.” In the process of acquiring these meanings, they came to stand in as “representative” objects for Germany and the dangers of diseased meat.¹⁶ Notwithstanding the fact that British diets included a wide range of sausages and other processed-meat products, the hostility directed at German sausages and German-sausage makers expressed not only fears about food and disease but also growing anxieties related to Germany that reflected a fluctuating strand of Anglo-German antagonism rather than political, socioeconomic, or cultural realities.¹⁷ While this emphasis on the German sausage is not to ignore how other national foodstuffs were used as national signifiers or in expressions of xenophobia, this essay concentrates on how material objects were employed to focalize national stereotypes of Germany and how the discourse around German sausages can be understood as part of the growing concern about German nationhood and German competition. It addresses how sausages were used as symbols in expressions of anti-German sentiment and how German sausages and German-sausage makers became things and people to be feared. Such an examination provides a further way of understanding Victorian and Edwardian interactions with Germany, concerns about food, and the role of the popular press in voicing these fears, because it was through the German sausage that anti-German sentiment and questions of food safety were articulated, merged, and mutually reinforced.

Newspaper, periodicals, and comical and satirical magazines offer rich sources for examining sausages as material objects, symbolic objects, and sources of concern. In looking at how the German sausage was represented in editorials, in letters to the press, in satirical cartoons, in the reporting of prosecutions for the sale of diseased meat, and in medical debates, it becomes possible to examine not only their physical attributes—or the dangers associated with their ingredients—but also how they were employed metaphorically in manifestations of anti-German sentiment. There are, however, limitations to these sources. Editorial positions cannot be taken as proxies for public opinion, and it is hard to determine how readers may have read and understood newspaper articles, reports, and illustrations. Notwithstanding these limitations, as Mark Hampton explains, “[I]t is difficult to overstate the importance” of the Victorian and Edwardian press because newspapers and periodicals were an essential reference point for many and a means through which the social

¹⁵ For a survey of Anglo-German relations, see Jan Rüter, “Revisiting the Anglo-German Antagonism,” *Journal of Modern History* 83 (2011): 579–617.

¹⁶ E. Trentmann, “Materiality in the Future of History: Things, Practices and Politics,” *Journal of British Studies* 48 (2009): 288; L. Reinermann, “Fleet Street and the Kaiser: British Public Opinion and Wilhelm II,” *German History* 26 (2008): 469.

¹⁷ See Rogers, *Beef and Liberty*, for how culinary issues reflected hostility to the French in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

world was represented and understood.¹⁸ Newspapers were the most important organs for spreading popular ideas and were a powerful, if controversial, mechanism for expressing and shaping questions of identity. They acted as conduits for disseminating reports, informed opinion from experts, gossip, and rumors to the widest possible audience, often with a view to building circulation. In doing so, they fed public and political discussions of local, national, and foreign events. While Jan Rüger suggests that the "established quality press" voiced opinions "more or less rationally," the increasing use of sensation-seeking reports in provincial newspapers stirred up the fears and prejudices of their readers. Yet the need to sell newspapers ensured that they printed what they believed would be popular, in effect giving voice to their readers' "subconscious thoughts."¹⁹ Newspapers spoke to and claimed to speak for various publics, and thus they became conduits for expressions of anti-German feeling. Through an analysis of newspapers' discussions of the German sausage and sausage makers, and an examination of how newspapers and periodicals employed the sausage as a synecdoche for Germany, a further dimension to British perceptions about Germany is exposed. Rather than being simply tied to fluctuations in international relations, the labels and concerns that came to be attached to the German sausage reveal how the two decades before 1914 were not as transformative in shaping Anglo-German perceptions as others have suggested.²⁰

SAUSAGES, SYMBOLS, AND XENOPHOBIA

Although the sausage was no Victorian culinary invention, in the nineteenth century sausages became an essential component of working-class diets and fast-food stalls. In an environment where most meat was cooked in a frying pan, sausages were an ideal and convenient food. Immigration and culinary transfer saw new types of sausages introduced into British diets, but they essentially formed what the medical officer of Strand Union referred to as "low food."²¹ For many, sausages were "cheap food for hungry soul[s]" and offered a savory flavor for those who seldom had a full meal.²² However, although the sausage's associations with cheap and poor diets persisted in the second half of the nineteenth century, all types of sausages grew in popularity. They progressively appeared on the tables of middle-class families and were mentioned as suitable hors d'oeuvres for modest dinner parties. As the number of butchers involved in the sausage trade rose dramatically, newspapers carried an ever-increasing number of advertisements from a range of butchers, meat sellers, and delicatessens, both English and European, which prominently featured a wide variety of sausages for sale. By the 1880s, sausages were reported to be very much in vogue among all classes, while commentators in the early twentieth

¹⁸ M. Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850–1950* (Chicago, 2004), 19; A. Jones, *Powers of the Press: Newspapers, Power and the Public in Nineteenth-Century England* (Aldershot, 1996).

¹⁹ Rüger, "Revisiting the Anglo-German Antagonism," 594; Panayi, "Anti-German Riots in Britain," 74.

²⁰ Rüger, "Revisiting the Anglo-German Antagonism," 579–617.

²¹ *The Satirist; or, The True Censor of the Times*, 25 August 1849, 375.

²² "A Domestic Dialogue," *Leeds Mercury*, 15 August 1872, 6; *Daily News*, 30 November 1889, 5; *Leeds Mercury*, 29 May 1896, 5.

century noted how working-class diets had come to favor “prepared or semi-prepared” foods, such as sausages.²³

Sausages were not simply present in diets or on the streets. They were a feature of numerous contemporary novels, either as food or as a descriptive term or signifier, and were culturally visible in other ways, from Punch and Judy shows to the knowing culture of music hall songs.²⁴ The sausage was equally used in political satires. More than this, the sausage became associated in the public mind with Germany and Germans. Although the German immigrant community, which reached its peak in the 1890s, predominantly settled in London, there was a much wider awareness of German immigrants and Germany.²⁵ Victoria’s marriage to Albert, Prince of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, helped set German immigrants apart from other groups and was to have a profound influence on Victorianism, but the monarchy was not the only factor shaping Britain’s image of Germany and Germans.²⁶ Until 1891, Germans represented the largest minority population in Britain: in 1861 there were 28,644 Germans in England and Wales, rising to their peak of 53,324 in 1911. Outside London, there were small but significant German communities in Manchester, Liverpool, Bradford, Hull, Leeds, and Glasgow.²⁷ Although merchants and entrepreneurs constituted the most important occupational group in terms of numbers and influence, many German immigrants moved into the food and catering trades, often as butchers, sugar-bakers, waiters, hoteliers, and delicatessen owners. They became an important component in the provision of meats: estimates suggested that some 1,200 German butchers were in business between 1881 and 1911, with Sheffield having 18 German butchers by 1914. Given the size of the German immigrant community, many of these butchers catered to local and nonimmigrant communities, and German butchers became particularly prominent in the sausage trade. They introduced a variety of sausages into Britain as part of a culinary transfer, ensuring that the German sausage became the most visible German influence on British diets.²⁸ These sausages were branded as “German” to reflect their alleged geographical provenance, ingredients, and style. The West and the East End of London, Liverpool, and Manchester boasted German-sausage factories, and many of these businesses advertised nationally.²⁹

Long-standing connections between Britain and Germany informed the ways in which the British viewed the country and its inhabitants because the Victorians

²³ “Sausages,” *Bristol Mercury*, 20 January 1844, 6; *Liverpool Mercury*, 22 December 1888, 7; “Little Dinners,” *Hearth & Home*, 22 June 1899, 263; G. Newman, “The Administrative Control of Food,” *Public Health* 19 (1906): 76.

²⁴ See Waddington, “The Dangerous Sausage,” 51–71.

²⁵ See J. R. Davis, *The Victorians and Germany* (Bern, 2007); Rüger, “Revisiting the Anglo-German Antagonism,” 579–91.

²⁶ See E. Feuchtwanger, *Albert and Victoria: The Rise and Fall of the House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha* (London, 2006).

²⁷ See P. Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain during the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1995); R. Ashton, *Little Germany: Exile and Asylum in Victorian England* (Oxford, 1986); S. Manz, *Migranten und Internierte: Deutsche in Glasgow 1864–1918* (Stuttgart, 2003).

²⁸ Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain*, 105, 120; *German National Cookery for English Kitchens* (London, 1873); *Report of the Select Committee on Emigration and Immigration (Foreigners)* (London, 1889), 15.

²⁹ “A German Sausage Factory in London,” *Glasgow Herald*, 23 September 1882, 5; “Bad Meat and Light Punishment,” *Liverpool Mercury*, 17 July 1879, 6.

were fascinated by Germany. German culture and learning—from theology, philosophy, and art reform to German science, medicine, and universities—were discussed and admired by key British individuals and intellectuals, while a racial affinity between Teutons and Anglo-Saxons was identified.³⁰ However, we should be wary of reading the opinions of an elite of cultural brokers and Germanophiles as representing uniform attitudes toward Germany. Popular opinion was often contradictory and not as positive. Although Anglo-German hostility in 1914 was never preordained, feelings toward Germany fluctuated between 1850 and 1914. Press attitudes, even in the years immediately before the First World War, could change from Germanophobe to Germanophile according to political and imperial developments, and even conservative Fleet Street newspapers like *The Times*, which were broadly sympathetic to Germany, could be critical.³¹ As Lord Houghton explained to the Leeds Mechanics Institute in 1870, the German people were regarded in Britain with a “mingled feeling of interest and disregard.”³² Some of this feeling was shaped by what one German refugee felt was his fellow immigrants’ “ponderous, prosy and cantankerous nature.”³³

Although comments on German provincialism, boorishness, and drunkenness were part of a broader hostility toward immigrants in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, this feeling of disregard was reflected in how popular stereotypes of Germans shifted. Whereas early nineteenth-century representations of Germany associated Germans with beer and Romanticism—music, romantic poetry, and picturesque landscapes—these virtues were supplemented after 1840 by other qualities. Notwithstanding the continuing rise in Germany’s reputation for scholarship, science, and medicine, after 1871 growing ambivalence toward Germany and periodic outbursts of Germanophobia started to color perceptions. The creation of a new nation-state at the heart of Europe—one associated with neofeudal militarism—did create unease, and British commentary on Germany started to be more voluble in its concerns about authoritarianism, illiberalism, and anti-Enlightenment irrationality. Growing nationalism and national rivalry in Europe focused attention on German competition, and the end of the nineteenth century saw the beginnings of an Anglo-German estrangement.³⁴ Fears about Germany spilled over into the cultural sphere and were discussed extensively in the press. Existing stereotypes combined with newer sets of representations that built on perceptions of growing

³⁰ For a survey of Anglo-German transfer of ideas, technology, and cultural practices, see D. Blackbourn, “‘As Dependent on Each Other as Man and Wife’: Cultural Contacts and Transfers,” in *Wilhelmine Germany and Edwardian Britain: Cultural Contacts and Transfers*, ed. D. Geppert and R. Gerwarth (Oxford, 2008): 15–37. See also R. Ashton, *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought, 1800–1860* (Cambridge, 1980); P. Bridgewater, *Anglo-German Interactions in the Literature of the 1890s* (Oxford, 1999); Davis, *Victorians and Germany*; Major, “Britain and Germany: A Love-Hate Relationship?” 457–68; A. Pieper, *Music and the Making of Middle-Class Culture* (Basingstoke, 2008); J. Ramsden, *Don’t Mention the War: The British and the Germans Since 1890* (London, 2006).

³¹ Reineremann, “Fleet Street and the Kaiser,” 469–85.

³² “Leeds Mechanics’ Institute,” *Leeds Mercury*, 10 December 1870, 8.

³³ Cited in Ashton, *Little Germany*, 25; A. Shadwell, “The German Colony in London,” *National Review* 26 (1886): 805.

³⁴ See A. M. Birke, M. Brechtken, and A. Searle, eds., *An Anglo-German Dialogue: The Munich Lectures on the History of International Relations* (Munich, 2000).

socioeconomic hostility and equated Germans with militarism, boorishness, immorality, corpulence, and their sausage-based and unwholesome diets.³⁵

German sausages had started to be eaten outside Germany in the sixteenth century, but by the mid-nineteenth century, clear connections were made between the German nation and diet that reflected the importance of food for German immigrant communities, the visibility of the sausage in German diets, and the role of German immigrants in the meat trade.³⁶ Radical and satirical periodicals drew on associations among Germany, sausages, and pauperism to present Germany and Germans in stereotyped ways that built on ideas of sausages as cheap food and on perceptions of the German diet. For example, in expressions of hostility toward Victoria's marriage to Albert, the radical *Cleave's Penny Gazette of Variety and Amusement* noted how upon marrying Victoria, Albert needed to no longer make a living from "sausage making" (see figure 1). Slights on Albert reflected specific worries about how much he and the German princes would cost Britain, but links between the Germans and their diet, and sausages also had a much wider currency.³⁷ The Peelite *Morning Chronicle*, which was known for its lively reporting on foreign policy, spoke of "immortal sausages" in 1845 in connection with Germany; in discussing national stereotypes, the popular *Liverpool Mercury* explained how the German had his "ponderous sausage."³⁸ As negative comments about Germany began to appear throughout the 1860s, connections between Germany and the "sausage eating propensities" of the Germans became commonplace.³⁹ Whereas the cheap mass-circulation *Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, for example, could easily refer to "Herr German Sausage" in 1889 when making comparisons between Britain and Germany, the American writer and journalist Julian Hawthorne in the high-respected *Contemporary Review* could equally inform readers how "Nothing is more peculiarly national than the German sausage." In his account of his European travels, Hawthorne explained how Germans had "a way of carrying sausage about with them in their pockets—not always in their coat-pockets, either—and pulling it out to gnaw upon it, in moments of abstraction or ennui." He added that when commented upon, a German would scornfully reply, "Es ist mir Wurst!" [There is my Wurst].⁴⁰ In newspapers and periodicals and in satirical representations of Germany, sausages were both the quintessential German food and part of the Teutonic temperament.

The association of Germany with sausages was seldom sympathetic, however. Notions of Anglo-German affinity and enthusiasm for German learning coexisted with anti-German feeling. Although anti-German sentiment did not result in violence against German immigrants until 1914, outside of assault cases and sporadic

³⁵ Davis, *Victorians and Germany*, 341–82.

³⁶ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 August 1898.

³⁷ "Royal Rhapsodies," *Figaro in London*, 9 August 1834, 125.

³⁸ "Her Majesty's Visit to Germany," *Morning Chronicle*, 27 August 1845, 5; "Her Majesty's Visit to Germany," *Morning Chronicle*, 28 August 1845, 5; "Christmas," *Liverpool Mercury*, 17 December 1856, 3.

³⁹ See H. Mayhew, *German life and manners as seen in Saxony at the present day* (London, 1864); *Pall Mall Gazette*, 18 February 1871; *Daily News*, 2 May 1887, 5; "The German Domestic," *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 22 September 1888, 9; *Leeds Mercury*, 16 January 1890, 5; *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 18 November 1894, 2; "German Food," *Good Housekeeping* (1896), 115.

⁴⁰ *Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 9 February 1889, 86; J. Hawthorne, "Saxon Studies," *Contemporary Review* (December 1874): 561.

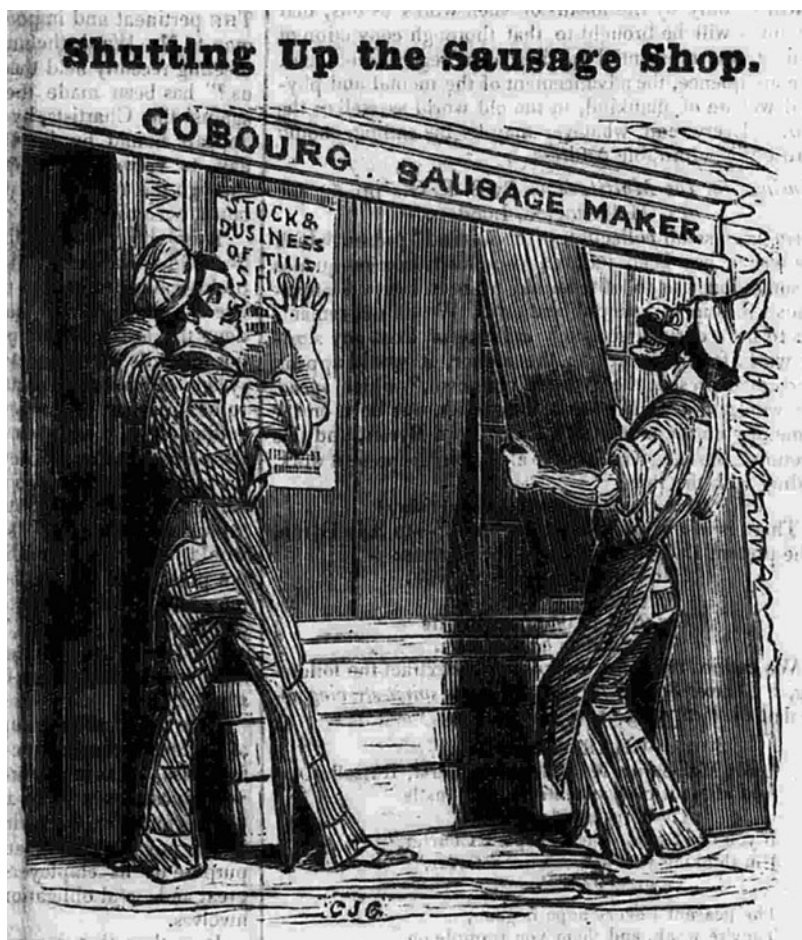


Figure 1—"Shutting Up the Sausage Shop." Source: *Cleave's Penny Gazette of Variety and Amusement*, 18 January 1840, 1

outbreaks in the 1890s, less violent forms of Germanophobia intensified as Germany was more and more perceived as an economic and imperial rival.⁴¹ Sausages were employed in these anti-German discourses as Germans were variously stereotyped as uncouth, brutish, immoral, and poor. For example, Germans were considered so unromantic that they sent their sweethearts "Strasburg sausage."⁴² Expressions of anti-German feeling and the use of the sausage stereotype increased in the 1880s as anxiety grew about commercial competition. The influx of German clerks acted as one focus of fears that German immigrants were undercutting British

⁴¹ P. Panayi, "Anti-immigrant Violence in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Britain," in *Racial Violence in Britain*, 6, 10; *East Ham Express*, 3 May 1895.

⁴² *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*; or, *Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser*, 19 June 1878, 6; "Vaterlanders," *Fun*, 4 February 1871, 48.

workers.⁴³ In “The Complaint of the Cockney Clerk,” *Punch* attacked German clerks who “[s]lave like a nigger” and voiced a common retort:

Send 'em back home, ah! even pay their passage!
Or soon, by Jove, we'll have to call our age,
The German “Sauce”-age!⁴⁴

Punch was not alone in expressing such sentiments. In an attack on free trade and foreign competition in 1886, the *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle* demanded the expulsion of all foreign businesses and opened its “war cry” with “down with the German sausage.”⁴⁵ From attacks on German princes as “sausage bloated royal paupers” in the 1840s to concerns about competition after 1880, the sausage stereotype proved popular with satirists, radicals, and journalists as a symbol for German greed, provincialism, and boorishness.⁴⁶

As concern grew about Germany’s national strength and Anglo-German diplomatic relations fluctuated, the German sausage became a visible metaphor for Germany in representations of international affairs. Before 1871, images of “fat little” German sausages that needed to be restrained were fairly benign, as demonstrated in satirical outbursts surrounding the Schleswig-Holstein question and Prussian military intervention in the duchies, which was widely perceived in Britain as an unnecessary attack on the legitimate rights of Denmark. Although the Schleswig-Holstein conflict was notoriously difficult to unravel, *Punch*’s widely circulated “Anti-Sausage League” satirized Prussian expansionist ambitions in Schleswig-Holstein.⁴⁷ *Punch* had already employed the notion of the “Great Sausage League” in 1855 when writing about attempts to form a stronger confederation of German states against Russian naval interests in the Baltic.⁴⁸ In the “Anti-Sausage League” and the accompanying cartoon, foods were used as national signifiers as complex international issues were reduced to understandable stereotypes (see figure 2). In the satirical verse, “bold Mr. BEEF” and “brave MONSIEUR BORDEAUX” are cast as the policemen of Europe to prevent “these small German Sausages” from kicking up “a shine.” In attacking “the various Teutonical tobies,” the rights of Denmark were defended, with *Punch* concluding that “the Sausages party had better look out” or they would be “fried.”⁴⁹

Following the Franco-Prussian War and the creation of the *Kaiserreich*, attacks became more acerbic and built on an existing sense of Germany’s apparent technical and scientific superiority as well as on concerns about commercial and military rivalry.⁵⁰ Negative attitudes toward Germany reflected increasing political concerns

⁴³ G. Anderson, “German Clerks in England, 1870–1914,” in *Hosts, Immigrants and Minorities: Historical Responses to Newcomers in British Society, 1870–1914*, ed. K. Lunn (Folkestone, 1980).

⁴⁴ *Punch Library of Humour: Mr Punch’s Cockney Humour*, ed. J. A. Hammerton (London, 1907), 52.

⁴⁵ *Hampshire Telegraph*, 21 August 1886, 9.

⁴⁶ *Satirist*, 18 October 1846, 333.

⁴⁷ See, for example, “Anti-Sausage League,” *Caledonian Mercury*, 8 January 1864, 4; *Liverpool Mercury*, 9 January 1864, 5.

⁴⁸ “League of Crowned Sausages,” *Punch*, 20 October 1855, 153.

⁴⁹ “Anti-Sausage League,” *Punch*, 9 January 1864, 14.

⁵⁰ See Davis, *Victorians and Germany*, 10, 359–71; P. Kennedy, *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860–1914* (London, 1987); R. Massie, *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany and the Coming of the Great War* (New York, 1991); J. Rieger, *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge, 2007).



THE ENGLISH BEEF, THE FRENCH WINE, AND THE GERMAN SAUSAGES.

THE BEEF. "NOW, LOOK HERE, YOU 'SMALL GERMANS,' DON'T JUMP OUT OF THE FRYING-PAN INTO THE FIRE—THAT'S ALL!"

Figure 2—"English Beef, the French Wine, and the German Sausages." Source: *Punch*, 9 January 1864, 17

over *Weltpolitik* and the perceived threat to Britain's colonial interests and naval supremacy. This antagonism toward Germany found expression in periodic outbursts of press hostility and in a more visible popular anti-German sentiment, which mixed xenophobic with jingoistic elements. Although in music hall songs Germanophobia mainly concentrated on the influx of Germans into the catering trade and the commercial sector, in newspapers and cartoons the German sausage acted as a convenient and negative signifier.⁵¹ Such representations were evident in relation to Germany's haphazard acquisition of colonies in the 1880s, but they were at their most potent in relation to German ambitions in Africa that ran counter to British interests. For example, *Fun* magazine referred to the "dis Afrigan beest" being turned into sausages in "der Faderland" as part of the "Germano-Africo Sausage Company" (see figure 3). With explicit reference to stereotypes of the German diet and Germany as a sausage-making nation, and to the suspect use of taboo meats in German sausages, the cartoon cast Germany as a butcher carving up Africa in the face of British passivity. In expressing fears about Germany's "unlimited" colonial aspirations, *Fun* linked German militarism and greed to German sausages to illustrate how both were integral to the German national character.⁵² This link was made not only in popular or satirical newspapers. When Kaiser Wilhelm II visited London in 1891, the crowd

⁵¹ D. Russell, *Popular Music in England, 1840–1914: A Social History* (Manchester, 1997), 152–54; "The German Sausage and the Spanish Onion," *Punch*, 19 September 1885.

⁵² "Germano-Africo Sausage Company Unlimited," *Fun*, 20 August 1890.

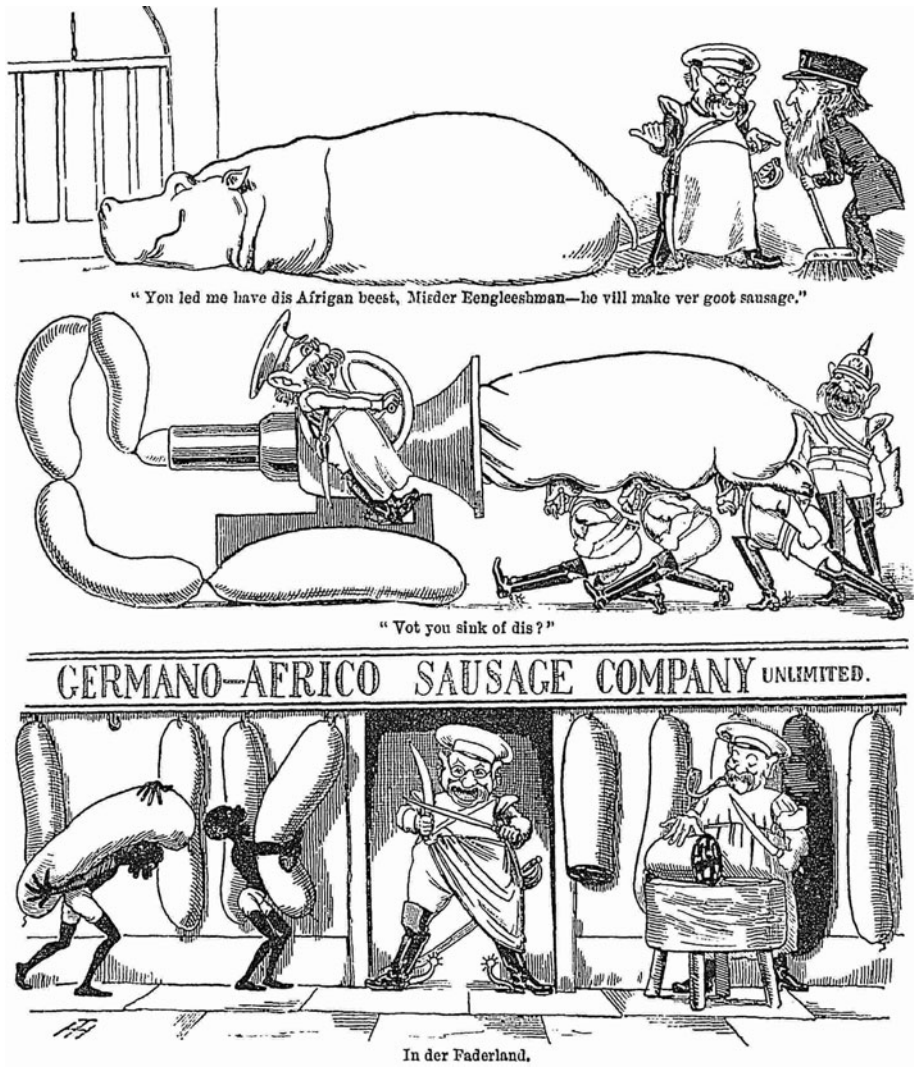


Figure 3—"Germano-Africo Sausage Company Unlimited." Source: *Fun*, 20 August 1890

was reported to have been abusive, shouting at one point "We don't want any German sausages here!" as they protested against German support for the Boers in South Africa.⁵³ Reactions to the Krüger telegram in 1896 equally drew on the sausage stereotype as attitudes toward Germany became more critical. The issue served to bring growing commercial, imperial, and political tensions together as hostility was expressed about the Kaiser's congratulations to President Krüger of the

⁵³ See *Caledonian Mercury*, 8 January 1864, 4; "Our London Correspondent," *Liverpool Mercury*, 11 July 1891, 5.

Transvaal following the defeat of the Jameson raid of the previous year. One newspaper protested about being "bounced out of our rights by the German sausage," while another referred to the kaiser as the "Sausage King."⁵⁴ As the *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* commented, "[T]he feeling of hatred against the 'sausage element' is bitter in the extreme."⁵⁵ By 1898, the *Pall Mall Gazette* could comfortably make a direct link between "the military sausage" and "the making of an empire."⁵⁶ In making repeated reference to the propensities of the "typical sausage-loving Germans" and their colonial aspirations, the British press voiced concern about German interventionism and militarism.⁵⁷ In terms of social, cultural, and political representations, Germany had become by the 1890s both a sausage-eating nation and an aggressive one—the sausage a synecdoche for Germany.

Negative attitudes toward Germany became more visible in the prewar period as Anglo-German relations were heavily strained by the start of German naval building, the two Moroccan crises, and the naval panic of 1908–9. Anti-German sentiment found expression in isolated outbreaks of violence directed at German immigrants and in growing press criticisms of Wilhelm II.⁵⁸ "Spy-fever," conspiracy theories, and fears of invasion drew popular interest, but the German sausage remained a visible symbol with which to represent Germany.⁵⁹ As one character in the invasion novel *When William Came* (1913) noted, England was "not going to be held under for long by a lot of damned sausage-eating Germans."⁶⁰ In debates about free trade and the provision of cheap food, the German sausage offered a symbol of the dangers of protectionism. Leading Liberal politicians waved German sausages in front of audiences as a warning and highlighted the poverty of the German diet.⁶¹ Lloyd George rallied supporters by telling them that he "was not afraid of the German navy; he was not afraid of German trade competition; but he had a real dread of the German sausage," while at York he informed a meeting "If this country wanted German tariffs, it must have German wages . . . German militarism and German sausages."⁶² German sausages offered a recognizable image through which to express anxieties about free trade, competition, and militarism.

As Stibbe explains, there is little doubt that such images (both positive and hostile) "are important historical facts in their own right."⁶³ While it is hard to unpick the influence of the sausage stereotype on popular perceptions of Germany or German

⁵⁴ "Made in Germany," *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 12 January 1896, 8; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 16 January 1896, 6.

⁵⁵ *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 27 February 1896, 5.

⁵⁶ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 August 1898.

⁵⁷ *Glasgow Herald*, 6 June 1890, 9.

⁵⁸ *The Times*, 22 May 1900; *West Ham Guardian*, 21 December 1901; Reinermann, "Fleet Street and the Kaiser," 469–85.

⁵⁹ Panayi, *Enemy in Our Midst*, 32–41; "The German Peril," *Quarterly Review* (1908): 264–98.

⁶⁰ Saki, *When William Came* (London, 1913).

⁶¹ A. Howe, *Free Trade and Liberal England, 1846–1946* (Oxford, 1997), 244–52. See, for example, "A Man of Qualities," *Manchester Courier*, 28 September 1903; "Liberal Meeting at Brimscombe," *Gloucester Chronicle*, 23 October 1903; *Edinburgh Evening News*, 12 December 1903, 3; *Western Times*, 28 January 1910, 14; *Western Times*, 27 August 1913, 2.

⁶² Cited in Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*, 100.

⁶³ M. Stibbe, *German Anglophobia and the Great War, 1914–1918* (Cambridge, 2001), 209.

immigrants, the frequency with which it was used in newspapers from across the political spectrum suggests that it offered a metaphor that was widely understood. As witness statements in a number of assault cases illustrate, the phrase “German sausage” as a slur on nationality did come into general usage.⁶⁴ For example, in one case in 1895, the court was told how a girl called Violet King had regularly annoyed a local barber of German descent “by pushing open the door of his shop and calling out, ‘German Sausage,’ ‘Dirty German.’”⁶⁵ Such taunts were not limited to childhood pranks: in a dispute between James Mason and his neighbor Richard Hupfer, a toolmaker, in Wittle, Essex, in 1903, Mason was reported to have told Hupfer’s wife “to keep the dirty, stinking German sausage smell out of your premises.” Mason also referred to Hupfer’s friends as “German sausages,” a phrase which met with knowing laughter in the court.⁶⁶ As one writer in the *Birmingham Post* explained, it became “a stale and thrashed-out joke” to refer to Germans as German sausages—such was the ubiquity of the term.⁶⁷

The knowing laughter, the use of the German sausage as a symbol in debates about free trade and in racial slurs, and the visibility of the sausage as a synecdoche for Germany in expressing concerns about economic or imperial rivalry are suggestive of how newspaper accounts reflected and influenced expressions of popular anti-German sentiment. Although after 1914 the German sausage was overtaken by images of the “Beastly Hun,” the repeated use of the sausage in characterizing Germany and the negative associations of Germans with their sausages may help explain why anti-German violence in 1914 and 1915 focused on German butchers. By 1914, the German sausage had come to be loaded with meanings to represent an easily understood symbol of Germany and German influences on Britain.

“THE MYSTERIOUS SAUSAGE AND THE PERPLEXING POLONY”⁶⁸

Whereas the sausage stereotype was used widely to represent Germany and featured prominently in attacks on the German nation and its colonial aspirations, another dimension to German sausages can be detected that linked these stereotypes and expressions of anti-German sentiment to growing fears about food safety. Sausages, no matter what their provenance or national association, were complex objects: they were full of ingredients and meanings that were the subject of uncertainty and gratuitous newspaper accounts that gave expression to growing alarm about the composition of the average sausage. The Victorians were troubled by the nature and quality of most manufactured foods, but as anxiety about food quality increased after 1850, and as the local apparatus of food and meat inspection was extended, concerns about all types of sausages and what went into them became shriller.⁶⁹ If sausages never

⁶⁴ See, for example, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 16 September 1895; *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, 22 November 1896, 12; *Illustrated Police News*, 25 March 1899, 10.

⁶⁵ *Standard*, 16 September 1895, 6.

⁶⁶ *Essex Newsman*, 11 July 1903.

⁶⁷ “Foreign Clerks,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, 20 July 1887, 4.

⁶⁸ “The Knackers’ Yard,” *Leeds Mercury*, 4 March 1896, 11.

⁶⁹ See Waddington, *Bovine Scourge*, for the expansion of meat inspection.

became the focus of a particular food scare in the same way as milk, beer, or imported meat did, they were regularly used to remind readers of the risks of eating certain foods.⁷⁰ To understand this fear, it is necessary to place the sausage and its materiality in context.

What went into the average sausage had long been a target for humorists, but as the *British Medical Journal* explained in 1899, the “individual endowed with the average amount of caution exhibits a genuine distrust of them.”⁷¹ Sausages were seldom what they seemed. Medical and newspaper reports emphasized how the proportion of meat in the average sausage was low and how they contained unexpected ingredients from moldy bread and sharp sand to tainted leaves “and other equally dubious material.”⁷² Claims that antiseptics, colorings, and preservatives were commonly added to all types of sausages and how starch, flour, rice, and breadcrumbs were used to bolster sausages and to help them hold water were legitimate.⁷³ Worries about the ingredients used in sausage making were part of a wider discourse about adulteration following revelations by analysts and doctors in the 1850s, which were given considerable publicity in the emerging national press. Alarm about the adulteration of everyday foods acquired renewed prominence after 1870 as anxiety focused on the sophistication of adulteration methods and wider concerns about public health.⁷⁴ Clear links were made between cheap and common foods, and adulteration; between dangerous and fraudulent food, and ill health; and among commodities, producers, and consumers. Growing apprehension about what went into sausages was part of these broader concerns about food production. However, notwithstanding a sense that sausages all too often included unwelcomed and dangerous ingredients, the threat from adulteration was not the primary concern—the main source of alarm was the meat used in sausages. Whereas apprehension about adulteration focused on the idea that the public were “cheated rather than poisoned,” in debates about the sausage this was reversed.

A focus on sausages and the meat they contained reflected the nature of food inspection and growing worries about the relationship between meat and disease as public apprehension about adulteration became less vociferous and local efforts to regulate markets and food retailers concentrated on cleaning up the meat and milk trade. Haphazard and fragmentary systems of local inspection and opposition from butchers ensured that identifying meat and meat products deemed “unfit for human consumption” was problematic. Nevertheless, notwithstanding these problems, attention focused on the physical properties of the meat inspected and the meat used in sausages.

Although the more squeamish avoided commenting on the precise composition of many sausages “for the obvious reason that it is not warranted to be formed of the

⁷⁰ For the influence of food scares on food policy, see M. French and J. Phillips, *Cheated Not Poisoned? Food Regulation in the United Kingdom, 1875–1938* (Manchester, 2000), 66–95.

⁷¹ *British Medical Journal* 1 (1899): 1235.

⁷² “London Sausages,” *Bury and Norwich Post, and Suffolk Herald*, 22 August 1876, 3; “Adulterated German Sausages at Newport,” *Western Mail*, 8 November 1883, 4; *British Medical Journal* 1 (1881): 242.

⁷³ “How Sausages Are Adulterated,” *Food and Health*, 24 August 1900, 13; J. Greenwood, *Veiled Mysteries* (London, 1883), 220; *British Medical Journal* 1 (1881): 242.

⁷⁴ See Burnett, *Plenty and Want*; R. Stern, *Home Economics: Domestic Fraud in Victorian England* (Columbus, 2008); French and Phillips, *Cheated Not Poisoned?*

flesh of any particular domestic animal,” sausages were feared to contain various taboo meats—notably, horseflesh, cat, and dog meat.⁷⁵ Evidence from seriocomic newspapers, such as *Illustrated Chips* and *Funny Folks*, illustrate how by the 1890s the suspected use of dog meat in sausages had become a running joke (see figures 4–5). If apprehension about the inclusion of various taboo meats was not enough, it was widely assumed that sausages existed at the bottom of the meat industry and harbored meat that was “unfit for human consumption” either because it was putrid or because it came from pigs, cows, sheep, or horses that had died from disease.⁷⁶ There was even a language to describe such meat: slinked veal, staggering bobs, and tibbies were used by the less scrupulous to produce imitation pork sausages, while “screw beef” was reportedly used in the manufacture of other types of sausage.⁷⁷ Evidence that sausages contained a significant proportion of diseased, “putrid, stinking and maggoty” meat was regularly commented upon by meat inspectors and became the subject of repeated court cases, which were extensively covered in the press. This trade was not only limited to those butchers who met the needs of the urban poor: it was felt that even respectable tradesmen “do not scruple to employ such materials [diseased meat] in supplying the demand for sausages.”⁷⁸ Many contemporary observers feared that it was a certainty that most sausages contained some putrid or diseased meat.

Such sausages were not just an offense to senses of taste. Although the epidemiological impact of meat-borne disease remained minimal, a growing body of medical opinion informed first by pathological studies and then by bacteriological research argued that putrid and diseased meat was prejudicial to health.⁷⁹ By the 1880s, it was generally accepted that certain animal diseases could cross the species barrier, that organisms found in meat could cause illness, and that, as the *Sanitary Record* explained, “people who ate flesh in [a] state of disease were likely to catch the disease.”⁸⁰

In debates about the dangers of diseased meat to human health, the sausage was identified as a major source of concern. As Thomas Walley, principal of the Royal Dick Veterinary School in Edinburgh and author of *A Practical Guide to Meat Inspection*, explained, of all the diseased meat sold, the amount of danger “is very small indeed as compared with that which exists in the consumption of sausages.”⁸¹ Reporting on a case in which a diseased cow was made into sausages, Henry Letheby, the strident medical officer of health and food analyst for the City of London, described how of the sixty-six people who ate the sausages, sixty-four were seized by symptoms of poisoning and one man was reported to have died.

⁷⁵ For cases of sausages containing taboo meats, see, for example, *Leicester Chronicle and the Leicestershire Mercury*, 28 August 1869, 2; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 25 September 1882, 4; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 19 February 1886, 13; “You Never Sausage a Thing,” *Funny Folks*, 6 July 1889; *Western Mail*, 3 December 1892, 6; *Evening Telegraph*, 19 August 1901.

⁷⁶ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 20 October 1865, 9; “Bad Meat and Sausages,” *British Medical Journal* 2 (1892): 1059; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 August 1865, 9.

⁷⁷ “Bread, Beef and Beer,” *Reynolds’s Weekly Newspaper*, 1 April 1860, 7; “The Mysteries of Sausage Making,” *Leeds Mercury*, 28 May 1859, 6.

⁷⁸ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 20 June 1882, 4; “Sausages,” *Bristol Mercury*, 20 January 1844, 6.

⁷⁹ For a full discussion of the issue of diseased meat, see Waddington, *Bovine Scourge*.

⁸⁰ *Sanitary Record*, 15 August 1889, 65; “Bad Meat Cases,” *Sanitary Record*, 15 August 1889, 91.

⁸¹ T. Walley, *A Practical Guide to Meat Inspection* (Edinburgh, 1890), 148.

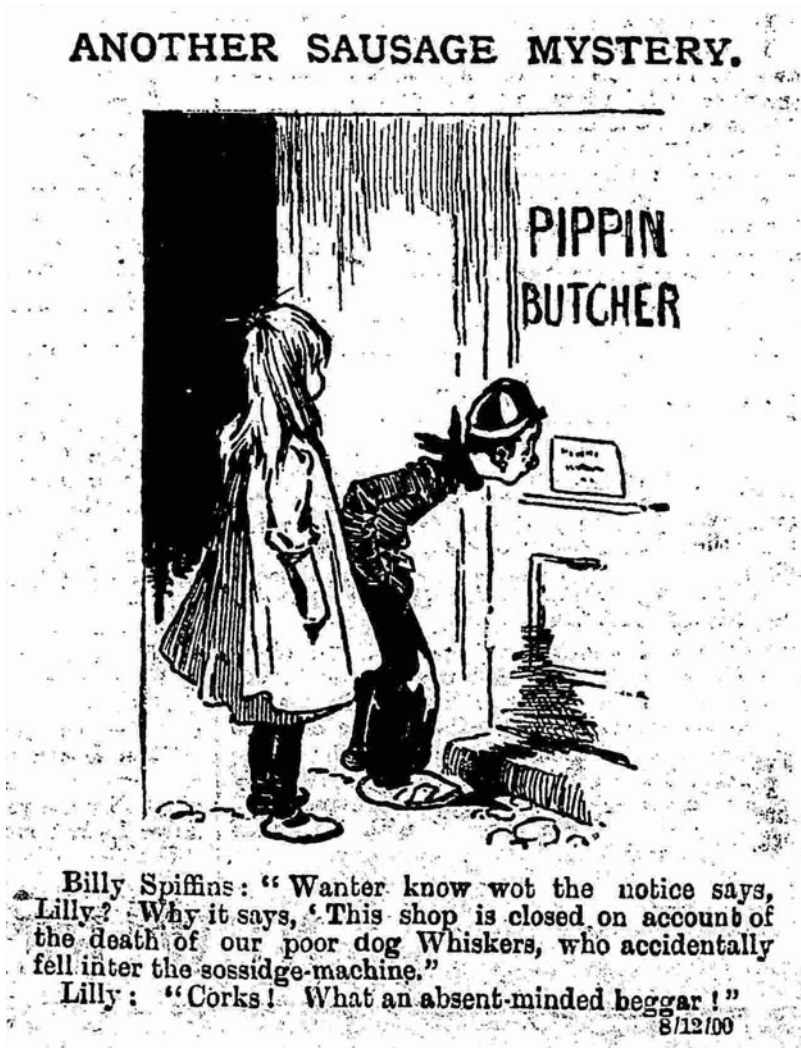
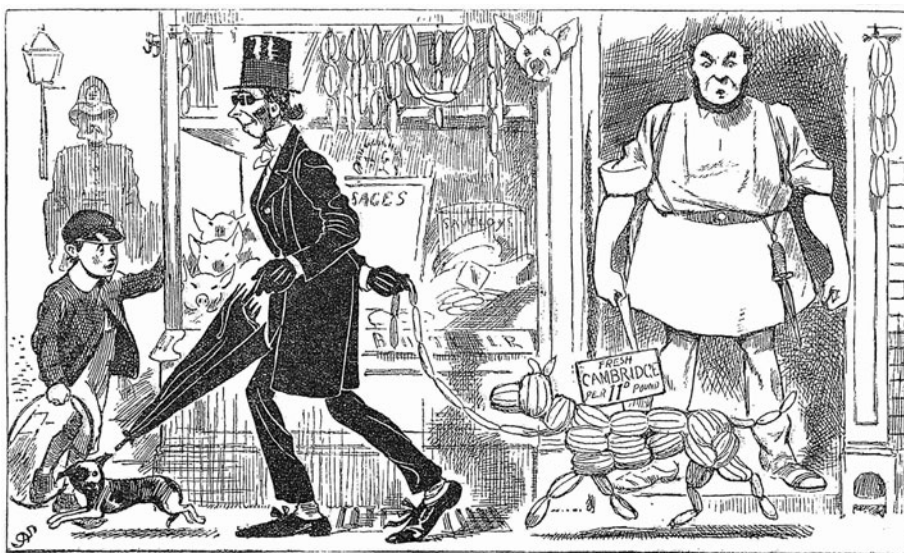


Figure 4—"Another Sausage Mystery." Source: *Illustrated Chips*, 8 December 1900, 3

The case was not an isolated incident. Such was the level of concern that newspapers repeatedly warned of the association of sausages with disease.⁸² At the very least, it was believed that eating sausages made from putrid or diseased meat caused diarrheal disorders, but the discovery in 1863–64 that the parasitic disease trichinosis could infect humans made pork sausages potentially dangerous. In response, doctors warned the public not to touch "any variety of sausages under any

⁸² See, for example, *Glasgow Herald*, 14 March 1864, 4; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 20 February 1889, 8; "Why Tinned Goods Are Dangerous," *Birmingham Daily Post*, 29 November 1892, 6.



YOU NEVER SAUSAGE A THING.

The evening papers have for some weeks been full of anecdotes of the sagacity of dogs—many of them, indeed, marvellous; but a correspondent has forwarded the following, which, as an example of intelligence in the canine race, is without rival.—Ed. F. F.

"Dear Sir,—One day last week, while walking past a noted sausage shop in my neighbourhood, N.S.W. Kensington, I suddenly missed my dog Ponto. I called and whistled, but in vain. The next evening I walked in the same direction, hoping to see my faithful companion. On passing the aforesaid sausage shop, I distinctly saw a tremulous motion—a sort of wagging, so to speak—in a string of sausages hanging up near the door. A sudden thought flashed upon me—I whistled, and to my surprise and joy, nearly all the sausages in the shop immediately followed me home. They were Ponto—dear old Ponto—tender, as ever, but with, perhaps, a little too much pepper.—Yours always truly,
"ANANIAS MONKHOUSE."

Figure 5—"You Never Sausage a Thing." Source: *Funny Folks*, 6 July 1889, 215

circumstances."⁸³ Although such warnings did little to reduce sausage consumption, in the 1880s and 1890s a growing body of medical studies implicated sausages in the spread of a range of other diseases, including typhoid and tuberculosis. In the first decades of the twentieth century, numerous public health manuals were clear about the potential health risk sausages represented.⁸⁴

Fears that sausages harbored putrid or diseased meat drew on a sense that the composition of most sausages, and hence the risk, was unknown. *Chums*, a weekly illustrated paper for boys, reinvented Otto von Bismarck's challenge of a duel to the pathologist Rudolf Virchow. The challenge had arisen in 1865 out of a debate in the Prussian Landtag over the refusal of the chamber to vote funds for the creation of a naval base at Kiel and the building of two frigates. In the debate, Virchow had accused Bismarck of misrepresentation. Bismarck sought deliberately to provoke conflict and discredit a political opponent as Virchow vehemently opposed his policies and championed social reforms over rearmament. In *Chums's* reimagined account, Virchow presents Bismarck with "two large sausages." On doing so,

⁸³ "The New Disease," *Glasgow Herald*, 27 January 1864, 3; "Flesh-Worm Disease," *Once a Week*, April 1866, 385; "A Horrible Story," *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*; or, *Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser*, 13 December 1865, 3.

⁸⁴ *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England* 3 (1892): 121; "Relation between Human and Animal Tuberculosis," *Lancet* 2 (1902): 1277; Newman, "Administrative Control of Food," 66–86; A. R. Littlejohn, *Meat and Its Inspection* (London, 1911), 190–91.

Virchow is reported to have explained, "One of the sausages . . . is filled with trichinae—it is deadly. The other is perfectly wholesome. Externally they can't be told apart."⁸⁵ Events were different from how *Chums* recounted them: although Bismarck did challenge Virchow to a duel, the sausage reference came from a public meeting at which Virchow spoke where a defender of the German sausage industry was forced by a journalist to consume a dubious sausage.⁸⁶ Although *Chums's* intention was comic, the short article pointed to the difficulties in recognizing the concealed dangers sausages contained. As one experienced London sausage maker explained to a reporter from the *Daily Telegraph*, "If you take my advice, you won't look at the sausages at all. There ain't no pints about a sausage that you could tell a good 'un from a bad 'un by."⁸⁷

Difficulties with recognizing "dangerous food which offered no telltale indications of smell, taste, or appearance" more generally presented doctors, as Hardy has explained, with "a serious problem of identification." The problems in identifying sausages containing diseased or putrid meat, however, were compounded by how they were made.⁸⁸ Sausage manufacturers relied upon a number of processes to disguise the presence of putrid or diseased meat: such meat was often steeped in chemicals or boiled, and then minced with spices or smoked to mask the flavor and "cover all imperfections." Unscrupulous manufacturers mixed diseased and putrid meat with good meat or would pour fat from healthy carcasses over diseased meat—a process called polishing—to give it the pretense of healthiness.⁸⁹ "In such cases," as *Public Health* commented, "the detection of diseased or putrid meat is often difficult."⁹⁰ The result was that, as the prosecution explained in a case brought against a German-sausage maker in 1882, those eating sausages could ingest "under a pleasant disguise some very disagreeable matter."⁹¹ What made matters worse was that it was feared that such diseased meat found its way not only into poor homes but also onto the dining tables of "the rich in the disguise of a well-seasoned [sausage]."⁹² In the face of this evidence, commentators marveled how the consumption of sausages "was not signalized by a marked increase in the death rate in those localities where the demand for them was greatest."⁹³ By the end of the nineteenth century, the public was regularly advised to "Beware of Sausages," while local authorities stepped up their efforts in the first decades of the twentieth century to confiscate "considerable

⁸⁵ "Honour Was left Unsatisfied," *Chums*, 8 July 1896, 725.

⁸⁶ C. Goschler, "'Wahrheit' zwischen Seziersaal und Parlament: Rudolf Virchow und der kulturelle Deutungsanspruch der Naturwissenschaften," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 30. Jahrg., H. 2, Neue Wege der Wissenschaftsgeschichte (April–June 2004): 244–45.

⁸⁷ "Cheap Sausages," *Liverpool Mercury*, 12 March 1873, 7.

⁸⁸ A. Hardy, "Food, Hygiene, and the Laboratory: A Short History of Food Poisoning in Britain, circa 1850–1950," *Social History of Medicine* 12 (1999): 296.

⁸⁹ "How Sausages Are Adulterated," *Food and Health*, 24 August 1900, 13; *Glasgow Herald*, 14 March 1864, 4; "Police Intelligence," *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 30 August 1868, 5; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 November 1870, 6; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 24 November 1870, 4; "Horrible Disclosure of the Sausage Trade," *Blackburn Standard*, 19 July 1879, 3; W. Wylde, *The Inspection of Meat: A Guide and Instruction Book to Officers Supervising Contract-meat and to All Sanitary Inspectors* (London, 1890), 2.

⁹⁰ "The Manufacture and Adulteration of Sausages," *Public Health* 12 (1900): 636.

⁹¹ "A German Sausage Factory in London," *Glasgow Herald*, 23 September 1882, 5.

⁹² "Cattle Road to Ruin," *Household Words*, June 1850, 328.

⁹³ Greenwood, *Veiled Mysteries*, 214.

quantities of inferior, decomposing, or diseased meat about to be made up into sausages.”⁹⁴

“UNUTTERABLE HORROR”—THE GERMAN DANGER

How then does nation fit into this growing fear about the potential of the humble sausage to transmit or cause disease? While all types of sausages (no matter what their provenance or national origin) were viewed with suspicion and represented as objects of concerns, it was the “unutterable horror” of the German sausage that became the focus of alarm, because it was shown to embody the worst excesses of the meat trade.⁹⁵ Although the production of sausages was not the exclusive preserve of German butchers or “meat mongers,” the German sausage and German-sausage makers were attacked more frequently and more vigorously in the press and in magistrates’ courts than were any other type of sausage or sausage maker. The attention directed at them was disproportionate to the number of German butchers there actually were, but condemnation of the composition of German sausages and the German-sausage trade by newspapers and sanitary officials was more than opposition to foreign foods. The sheer volume of attacks and legal cases involving German sausages and German-sausage manufacturers, and the way they were reported, illustrates a link between how the sausage was used in representations of Germany, popular anti-German sentiment, and concerns about honesty and threat to health. Although it is hard to determine whether this anti-German sentiment was directed at sausage manufacturers who were German or those butchers who produced German sausages, German sausages and German-sausage makers were regularly held responsible for spreading contagion as concerns about diseased meat merged with growing popular Germanophobia that characterized late Victorian and Edwardian Britain.

Notwithstanding the availability of an array of German sausages and the popularity of leading German delicatessens, alarm was voiced about the cheap abominations “made in Germany” and German sausages.⁹⁶ Although some writers feared a culinary invasion and damaging effects on trade that the profusion of German delicatessens had, at a basic level it was felt that the endless varieties of German sausages caused “unpleasant sensations” for those used to the English diet.⁹⁷ More serious concerns were expressed about the composition of German sausages. Newspapers throughout the second half of the nineteenth century appeared increasingly willing to spread alarmist rumors and reports about what went into German sausages and the dishonest practices of German-sausage makers. The expansion of the provincial press ensured that local incidents and concerns about German sausages were reported to a readership often fascinated with sensational and salacious stories. At the same time, through the recycling and repetition of the sordid details of magistrate cases and exposés involving German sausages and sausage makers between newspapers,

⁹⁴ “Beware of Sausages,” *Illustrated Chips*, 2 July 1898, 8; Newman, “Administrative Control of Food,” 77.

⁹⁵ *Derby Mercury*, 28 August 1872, 4.

⁹⁶ “Wares of Autolytus,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 November 1893, 5.

⁹⁷ “A Month in a German Hospital,” *Daily News*, 28 August 1890, 6; “Wares of Autolytus,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 November 1893, 5.

such reports reached a national audience. The result was that growing anxiety was expressed about the composition of German sausages, and this alarm offers insights into how anti-German sentiment found expression outside of the more visible forms of hostility, notably anti-immigrant violence, or in connection with international and imperial politics.

As the number of Germans in the catering trade grew and fears were voiced about German competition, clear connections were made between German butchers and sausage manufacturers, and dishonesty. The latter came to be seen as a national characteristic as unease grew about the number of poor German immigrants connected to criminality.⁹⁸ Just as Wilhelm II could be labeled duplicitous following his support of President Krüger against the British in South Africa, so too could German butchers and sausage makers be characterized because it was believed that the average German sausage contained "deadly mysteries" that were concealed beneath their "deadly red skins" by their smoked and spicy character.⁹⁹ In 1900, German sausage manufacturers were even reported to be using "Bismarck brown" and preservatives to conceal the nature of their "bundle[s] of mystery."¹⁰⁰ Such attacks should not be read as suggesting that the British diet was essentially conservative in regard to taste—evidence points to the fact that many liked their foods spicy—or seen as reflecting a sense of culinary superiority. Rather, these concerns concentrated on what went into German sausages and the subsequent risks associated with eating them. As the *Preston Guardian* noted, "[T]he intellect of man staggers before the problem of what a German sausage may contain."¹⁰¹

Whereas complaints about adulteration concentrated on the dishonesty of German butchers and sausage manufacturers, German sausages were repeatedly attacked for containing horseflesh or dog meat—animals beyond the realms of good taste when it came to food.¹⁰² As *Judy* magazine quipped, "I love my slice of German, I adore my cheap 'polony,' but never dreamed my luxuries were donkey, dog, and pony."¹⁰³ Although the French were equally criticized for eating horsemeat, Germans were attacked for exposing the British to such distasteful practices, while the idea that German sausages were made from horseflesh and dog meat became a potent symbol in debates over free trade. As one liberal politician explained in 1909, where no Englishman ate horseflesh willingly, "he dare say if he wanted a horse sausage" he could get it from a German.¹⁰⁴ This association of German sausages with taboo meats was sufficient to arouse disgust. However, German sausages were also feared to be prone to putrefactive change. These concerns reflected

⁹⁸ Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain*, 115–16.

⁹⁹ "Knicknacks," *Fun*, March 1885, 93; *London Journal*, February 1870, 144; "Wares of Autolyclus," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 5.

¹⁰⁰ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 18 January 1900.

¹⁰¹ *Preston Guardian*, 28 July 1877.

¹⁰² See, for example, "'Slink' Butchers," *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 16 March 1856, 3; "Manufacturing Diseased Horse Flesh into Sausages," *Leeds Mercury*, 9 October 1869, 1; "Gleanings," *Birmingham Daily Post*, 29 April 1880, 6; "German Sausage Trade," *Glasgow Herald*, 27 August 1881, 7; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 September 1882, 3; "German Sausages," *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 13 May 1883; "Our 'Export' of Old Horses," *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 27 November 1894, 4; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 21 December 1900, 7.

¹⁰³ *Judy*, 4 October 1882, 157.

¹⁰⁴ Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation*, 80–100; "Tariff Reform," *Western Times*, 26 April 1909.

contemporary ideas about meat products undergoing a process of decomposition, which was initially thought to be caused by chemical poisons and then by ptomaines or putrefactive alkaloids. Reports highlighted symptoms that came to be labeled “food poisoning” as attention was directed at bacterial food poisoning following a number of large-scale outbreaks that were traced back to processed meat.¹⁰⁵

Notwithstanding these worries about putrefaction and ptomaine poisoning, the key concern was not adulteration, “foreign” objects, or the use of taboo meats. Rather, it was the belief that German-sausage makers were the main culprits in the sale of “unwholesome food.” In a fictitious conversation in the popular magazine *Once a Week*, the more knowledgeable speaker commented: “[I]n all probability, that [German] sausage is made from putrid meat—you may always suspect bad meat where there is high seasoning, and there are hundreds of instances on record of people rotting away at their extremities, from eating these putrid German sausages.”¹⁰⁶ The *Manchester Times* explained to gourmets how those animals in an “advanced state of disease are slaughtered and sold on the spot, to the compilers of German sausages” before noting how “glandered horses, cows which die in calving, and still-born calves, are all considered as fair grist to the sausage-mills.”¹⁰⁷ This was not simply speculation. As a German-sausage maker in Liverpool explained: “[W]ots werry [*sic*] bad indeed, we makes inter saverlors and Germans.”¹⁰⁸ These claims were supported by numerous court cases. German butchers and “sausage monger[s]” were regularly prosecuted for using putrid or diseased meat. For example, a German-sausage manufacturer in Leeds was charged in 1881 with making sausages from rotten horseflesh, two horribly diseased sheep, and a can of red ochre, while in a widely reported case in 1903, John Hemeter, a German butcher in King’s Lynn, was fined and imprisoned for preparing the carcass of a tubercular cow for a large German-sausage manufacturer in London.¹⁰⁹

The danger to health from German sausages was graphically highlighted in the respected *Quarterly Review*, which had played an important role in promoting the merits of German literature. The periodical explained that when German sausages were not properly prepared,

the sausages ferment; they grow soft . . . and in this state they occasion in the bodies of those who eat them a series of remarkable changes, followed by death. The blood and the muscles of a sausage-poisoned man gradually waste; as also do all the other organs and tissues susceptible to putrefaction.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ *Lancet* 1 (1881): 988; *British Medical Journal* 2 (1864): 171; “Putrid Meats,” *Leeds Mercury*, 29 September 1868, 3; *Western Times*, 9 August 1904. For a broader discussion of food poisoning, see Hardy, “Food, Hygiene, and the Laboratory,” 293–311.

¹⁰⁶ W. Ellis, “Our Peck of Diet,” *Once a Week*, April 1860, 396.

¹⁰⁷ “Secrets of the Cook Shop,” *Manchester Times*, 6 January 1849.

¹⁰⁸ “The Mysteries of Sausage Making,” *Liverpool Mercury*, 2 December 1842, 393.

¹⁰⁹ *Leeds Mercury*, 5 March 1881, 7; *Lincolnshire Chronicle*, 20 November 1903, 6. For further cases, see *Bell’s Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 5 August 1865, 2; *Tomahawk*, 12 September 1868, 105; *Liverpool Mercury*, 26 July 1877, 6; *Preston Guardian*, 28 July 1877, 4; “Large Seizure of Disease Meat,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, 15 June 1878, 6; “A German Sausage-maker Heavily Fined,” *Western Mail*, 17 July 1879, 3.

¹¹⁰ *Quarterly Review* (September 1850): 478.

While *Once a Week* sensationalized the threat, evidence in medical journals demonstrated just how dangerous German sausages could be. The *British Medical Journal* carried a report in 1855 from a Swansea doctor about the case of a "fine little boy" who had died within three hours of eating a German sausage. Further deaths were reported where German sausages were implicated.¹¹¹ The discovery in the 1860s of high levels of trichinosis in German livestock directly associated German meat, and particularly German sausages, with disease. *Once a Week* consequently warned its readers to "beware of German sausages . . . as they would beware of an assassin."¹¹² A concrete threat to health from German sausages was detected in trichinosis, but this did not stop newspapers from associating the consumption of German sausages with a wide range of other diseases and disorders from tuberculosis to food poisoning.

As anti-German sentiments became more evident in newspapers and periodicals in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, opposition combined antialienism, class prejudice, and political, colonial, and economic rivalry. It was directed at German clerks, tailors, and waiters for taking jobs and working long hours, and at the noise created by German bands. But it also was expressed in increasingly vocal attacks on the dangerous German sausage.¹¹³ In Preston, which was not known for its large German immigrant community, there was alarm not only at the fact that one slaughterhouse was regularly involved in the "killing of diseased animals," but also that working in this slaughterhouse were "a number of Germans engaged in the manufacture of some kind of food from this unwholesome flesh."¹¹⁴

Concern peaked in the 1880s at the height of debate about the dangers posed by diseased meat and sausages and against a background of high levels of German immigration. Newspapers carried almost weekly revelations of the meat and other "materials" that went into German sausages. These revelations were backed up by an upsurge in the number of diseased meat cases brought before magistrates that involved German-sausage makers. Prosecutions were not just limited to London, where over half the German immigrants settled: cases were reported across the country and not just in those areas where Germans lived in larger numbers.¹¹⁵ Although regulating the meat trade proved problematic, practical measures were taken by some councils to protect the consumer. For example, in 1881, Hackney Council appointed extra food inspectors to prevent the manufacture of "unwholesome" German sausages following reports that diseased horseflesh was used in their production.¹¹⁶ Seizures of diseased meat and sausages suspected of harboring diseased meat rose dramatically. Whereas magistrates were felt to "show a remarkable disinclination to exercise full powers they possess of passing a sentence of

¹¹¹ W. H. Michael, "Case of Fatal Poisoning by German Sausage," *British Medical Journal* 3 (1855): 762; *Glasgow Herald*, 14 March 1864, 4.

¹¹² "Flesh-Worm Disease," *Once a Week*, April 1866, 386.

¹¹³ P. Panayi, "German Immigrants in Britain, 1815–1914," in *Germans in Britain Since 1500*, ed. P. Panayi (London, 1996), 89–91.

¹¹⁴ *Lancet* 2 (1873): 466.

¹¹⁵ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 28 February 1880, 6; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 27 August 1881, 6; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 27 May 1883, 7; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 17 December 1887, 6; "Summer Sausages," *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 28 September 1890, 16; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1 September 1900, 4.

¹¹⁶ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 23 November 1881, 4; "The Fall of the Sausage," *Judy*, 5 October 1881.

imprisonment” for those caught selling diseased meat, German-sausage makers were not so fortunate.¹¹⁷ When caught, they were more likely than other sausage makers, no matter what their nationality, to be prosecuted rather than warned: they were dealt with through heavier fines and could face longer terms of imprisonment. For example, in Liverpool “an atrocious ‘diseased meat case’” involving a German-sausage maker resulted in a £100 fine, while in Bradford the magistrate sentenced a German-sausage manufacturer named Naylor to three months imprisonment.¹¹⁸ These attacks should not be seen as surprising. After 1870, opposition to German immigrants focused on their supposed influx into the catering trade, which produced a surge in popular expressions of anti-German feeling that gave voice to deeper anti-German sentiment and concerns about Germany’s imperial aspirations. The press started to assume, as Charles Dickens’s *All Year Round* explained in 1883, that “the adjective ‘German’ is . . . in English commerce the synonym for ‘bad,’ as, for instance . . . German sausages.”¹¹⁹ Righteous indignation was expressed that all too often the “poisonous German sausage manufacturers” were allowed to escape with “comparatively trivial fines.”¹²⁰ The *Preston Guardian*, responding to the conviction of a German-sausage manufacturer, suggested that the man should not have been fined but instead horsewhipped before being sent to prison such was the abominable nature of his crimes.¹²¹

The *Preston Guardian*’s response was extreme, but throughout the 1890s and 1900s, German sausages and sausage makers continued to be targeted as hostility to German immigrants rose alongside growing Anglo-German antagonism and more widespread enmity toward immigrants.¹²² German sausage manufacturers were watched by sanitary officials and, as the medical officer for Bethnal Green noted, unscrupulous sausage manufacturers “have to be very careful and cannot carry on their business openly.”¹²³ However, whereas newspapers continued to report sausage cases, the visibility of the German sausage and German-sausage makers in prosecutions declined in the 1900s. As Anglo-German tensions mounted, and as morning and evening halfpenny newspapers proliferated, anti-German sentiment was more likely to spill over into open hostility. At the same time, changes in the nature of meat inspection, which became routine and subject to less sensational reporting, rather than a fall in prosecutions, also accounts for this decline. As systems of meat inspection improved, there was equally a growing sense among sanitary officials that other food-related risks posed a more serious danger to health. The horrific revelations associated with the Chicago meatpacking industry in 1906 and the dangers associated with American meat and meat products presented a new danger, while increasing attention was directed at the dangers of

¹¹⁷ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 29 July 1879, 10.

¹¹⁸ “Bad Meat and Light Punishment,” *Liverpool Mercury*, 17 July 1879, 6; *Leeds Mercury*, 2 August 1883, 5.

¹¹⁹ “As Others See Us,” *All the Year Round*, 3 November 1883, 487.

¹²⁰ “Here’s a Nice Little Appetitious Trifle!” *Fun*, November 1882, 192.

¹²¹ *Preston Guardian*, 28 July 1877, 4.

¹²² See, for example, “Summer Sausages,” *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, 28 September 1890, 16; *Leeds Mercury*, 29 May 1896, 5; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1 September 1900, 4; *Lincolnshire Chronicle*, 20 November 1903, 6.

¹²³ *Sunderland Daily Echo*, 24 August 1901.

milk-borne infection.¹²⁴ As new items of food—milk, cockles, oysters—were implicated in the spread of disease, concerns about German sausages became less about disease and more about them as symbols.

CONCLUSIONS

The hostility expressed by the *Preston Guardian* was more than Charles Osbourne's music hall complaint about "swarms of foreigners everywhere": it focused anti-German sentiment on the behavior of the makers of German sausages.¹²⁵ However, as this essay has illustrated, the opinion voiced by the *Preston Guardian* was not an isolated one. Although reports about German sausages and their manufacturers could not rival reports about the Chicago meatpacking industry, fears about diseased meat and sausages combined in the German sausage. Alarm about what went into German sausages gave expression to a growing strand of popular anti-German sentiment, which drew on mounting insecurity about Britain's position on the world stage and the perceived economic threat that Germany and German immigrants presented. Popular anti-German sentiment was translated into how Germans were caricatured and onto material objects—in this case, the "deadly mysteries" that were feared to go into German sausages. Rather than being a mark of quality, contemporaries were clear that German sausages and German-sausage makers posed a greater threat than did other sausages or meat products by the very fact that they were German. As expressions of anti-German sentiment, these concerns were at their peak in the 1880s, but connections continued to be made in the early twentieth century. Such was the potency of these representations and concerns that German butchers were targeted in anti-German riots in 1914 and 1915.

The reasons why the German sausage became a focus of widespread anxieties about Germany prior to the more obvious imperial rivalry of the 1890s and 1900s is connected to how sausages as material objects became bearers of complex meanings. Cultural and gastronomic stereotypes overlapped in a discourse that linked Germany and German foreign policy to their national diets and aggressive nature, and associated German sausages with fears about diseased meat, adulteration, and the risks involved from eating them. As material objects, German sausages, more than any other food, were clearly associated with the worst excesses of the trade in putrid and diseased meat by the very fact that they were German. Through the sausage, questions about food safety and popular Germanophobic discourses were articulated and merged to become mutually reinforcing, so much so that the German sausage became both a staple for satirical comic representations of Germany and dishonesty in food production and a xenophobic slur. The sausage was therefore doubly symbolic: it became a vehicle for popular anti-German sentiment by providing a convenient stereotype through which to express wider international and imperial concerns as well as anxieties about food and disease. The implication was that just as sausages were dangerous and deceitful, so too were Germans with their outer casing hiding inner rottenness and dishonesty. In providing

¹²⁴ See J. A. Yoder, *Upton Sinclair* (New York, 1975); J. Harvey, *Pure Food: Securing the Federal Food and Drugs Act of 1906* (Princeton, 1989), 233–51; French and Phillips, *Cheated Not Poisoned?* 87–92.

¹²⁵ C. Osbourne, "The Naval Exhibition" (1891).

a vehicle for concerns about Germany and Germans, the meanings attached to German sausages demonstrate how nationalism and xenophobia could be played out around food, providing a further insight into how the fears attached to immigrant groups could be expressed in ways other than racial violence.

Whereas the connections between sausages and anti-German sentiment became visible in a range of social and cultural settings through satirical representations, cartoons, slang terms, and racial slurs, pointing to their social influence concerning how Germans and Germany were represented, the economic impact of these concerns is harder to determine. German-sausage makers did face comparatively heavy fines and appeared to have been targeted by sanitary authorities, but there is little evidence to suggest that German-sausage makers were driven out of business; most of those caught continued to trade.¹²⁶ Indeed, one common complaint was that even after having been prosecuted, sausage makers could continue to “poison” consumers.¹²⁷ Attacks on German sausages did not translate onto patterns of consumption. German sausages, just like cheap and adulterated bread, milk, and other processed foods, continued to be eaten notwithstanding the fears generated by these foodstuffs and expert opinion that they were injurious to health. As I have argued elsewhere, food consumption was shaped more by material concerns, standards of living, and domestic technology than it was by press reports and the fears they engendered about food and disease.¹²⁸ Stomach upsets were too ordinary and trivial to warrant serious alarm or action, while cheapness often outweighed concerns about the risks from adulterated foods and diseased meat or meat products. German sausages and German delicatessens were a common feature of most towns, but in terms of newspaper reports, legal cases, and evidence from medical officers and social commentators, the German sausage was as big a threat to digestion as the German nation was to British economic and imperial interests.

¹²⁶ See, for example, “Bad Meat and Light Punishment,” *Liverpool Mercury*, 17 July 1879, 6.

¹²⁷ See, for example, *Birmingham Daily Post*, 5 September 1871, 4.

¹²⁸ See Waddington, “The Dangerous Sausage,” 50–71.