

PENELOPE'S WEEKLY NOTES.

The best suburban eggs have this week reached the alarming price of 2/10 a dozen, and are so scarce as to be almost unobtainable in several localities. The butter and egg man, pursuing his avocation of gathering newly-laid eggs from suburban housekeepers who have them to spare, or, to be more correct, who contrive to spare them to sell to other suburban housekeepers anxious to buy them, has frequently of late arrived at his customers' houses with butter only for his stock in trade, announcing cheerfully: "No eggs to-day—and I don't know when there will be any."

A scarcity is to be expected at this time of year, but this year it is something more than a mere matter of season. Housekeepers who hitherto have been accustomed to eking out their weekly allowances by disposing of their eggs to their buttermen are now so startled at the high price of maize, and, indeed of all poultry feed, that they are killing off a large proportion of their stock. And as week by week this backyard slaughter goes on so is there ever less prospect of our egg market recovering a healthy tone, for the suburban egg is now a factor of importance. The prospect is indeed gloomy. We shall either have to pay an exorbitant price for our eggs or make shift without them. But, since the cost of living is now so excessive, it is unlikely many of us will use the former alternative; therefore, the demand for eggs will probably not exceed the supply.

Butter also has grown dearer, and bids fair to reach very soon the price we are told now obtains in New Zealand. There it is 1/6 a lb—here, we are paying this week 1/4½ a lb for it. Neither can we comfort ourselves with the reflection that cheese is cheap. In Sussex-street parlance it is firmer. The shopkeeper asks us 1/ a lb for that known as Bodalla and Bega, which are the kinds most commonly used by us.

Last week, when referring to cheese, space forbade the mention of several uses to which it may advantageously be put. For instance, many people have never tried it with cauliflower, yet the combination is excellent. The cauliflower is boiled till tender, then divided into small pieces, each large enough to serve as a helping for one person. Next, these pieces are neatly arranged in a well-buttered pie dish, and a thick, white sauce, into which (while cold), has been mixed one, tablespoonful of grated cheese is poured over. Finally, one tablespoonful each of grated cheese and bread-crumbs is strewn over the cauliflower and sauce, little dabs of butter are placed about, and the pie is well browned in a moderate oven.

Cabbage may be treated in the same way, and it is almost equally good. Or it may be cooked according to the following recipe:—Take a young cabbage, boil it till tender, drain it, and thoroughly press all the water from it. Then chop it well, and place in a saucepan and melt 2oz of butter. Into the melted butter stir one teaspoonful of flour, and after mixing it smoothly, add a layer of the chopped cabbage and a layer of cheese, and continue so placing the layers of cabbage and cheese until all the cabbage is used. Then place a little salt and butter on the top, cover with a lid, and stand it where it will simmer gently for half an hour. A tablespoonful of grated cheese greatly improves the flavour of many vegetable soups, notably onion soup. It should be stirred in, slowly and carefully, just before the soup is dished.

Cheese sauce is a distinct improvement to many kinds of fish, but perhaps particularly to mullet or bream.

The fish is prepared in the usual way, either baked, boiled, or fried, as may be preferred, and the sauce is simply a rich melted butter sauce, with a little grated cheese stirred carefully into it before it is cooked. It is better poured over boiled fish, but served in a sauce boat as an accompaniment to either baked or fried.

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The price of fruit has altered scarcely at all since last week. Tasmanian apples have grown a shade dearer, but there is yet an excellent cooking apple being sold for 1s a dozen, and a good eating apple for 10d and 1s a dozen. There is no change whatever in the citrus fruit, either as regards quality or price. Passionfruit seem to be more plentiful, and their price runs from 9d to 1s a dozen. Persimmons are 1d and 2d a piece, the smaller ones being almost destitute of flavour. Fiji bananas do not seem to be nearly as plentiful as the Tweed River variety—their price is 1s a dozen—while the river banana is frequently to be had for half that price. Beans, one of our most valuable and nutritious vegetables—are well worth buying just now. Their price is 2s and 2s 3d a peck. Cabbages are 6d and 8d a piece, and, generally speaking, of good quality and fair size. Tomatoes, much spoiled by the late rains, are 6d and 9d a dozen—here and there twice that price. Marrows are abundant, and 4d, 6d, and 8d each. Cucumbers and cobs of corn may be bought for 2d and 3d each. The best beetroot is 4d a bunch, and parsnips and carrots 3d and 2d respectively. Cauliflowers have just put in an appearance, but are still scarce and dear, good ones being 1s 3d each. We may expect them to improve in quality and price in the early future.