

PART VII.—CONSERVATION.

The conservation of surplus produce in periods of plenty for consumption in periods of future scarcity, is a marketing service of surpassing value. Since the time when Joseph was made ruler over the food warehousing system of Egypt, this service has become increasingly important in the progress of economic life.*

CHAPTER XXII.—PICKLING, PROCESSING AND COLD STORING.

As has been shown in Chapters I and II, egg production is subject to wide seasonal fluctuations which are reflected in the course of prices. If a large proportion of the spring surplus could be temporarily withdrawn from the markets and conserved until the autumn and winter, it would improve the low and, at times, uneconomic prices obtainable for eggs in the flush season; conversely, it would also, of course, reduce the peak prices obtainable for eggs in the season of scarcity. The producer would benefit because conservation creates a market during the glut period, and the higher prices then obtained for the greater part of his whole annual output would compensate for reduced prices later on. The consumer would benefit because conservation makes available large quantities of produce, during the season of shortage, at lower prices than those which would otherwise obtain. Both producer and consumer would benefit from the fact that the consumption of eggs, which declines appreciably when prices rise in the autumn, would be maintained by the supply of high-quality preserved eggs at a price more within the reach of all. In general, a comprehensive scheme of conservation would regulate the flow of produce to market and tend to stabilise prices.† Price stabilisation is, after all, very largely a question of cutting the cloth of supply according to the patterns of demand.

The home preservation of eggs in the spring for home use in the autumn and winter is common among producers and householders, and is also commonly practised by retailers, including bakers and confectioners. Producers are particularly well placed for preserving eggs owing to the fresh condition in which supplies can be secured, and there is very little doubt that more would be "put down" by them but for the uncertainty and difficulty of finding a suitable market. Local country markets seldom

* After Th. Macklin: "Efficient Marketing for Agriculture," London, 1921.

† See also Economic Series No. 2.