

PART IX.—CONCLUSION.

CHAPTER XXIV.—SOME POSSIBLE LINES OF ACTION.

The fact that a proportion of home-produced eggs on the market is inferior in the matter of interior quality, cleanliness and size to the best class of imports, has been brought out in the course of this Report. What proportion this may be of the total home production is largely a matter of surmise; that it is sufficient to damage seriously the reputation of English eggs, as a whole, there is no reason to doubt.

Shortage of egg supplies, generally, during the past ten years and the resulting keen competition among buyers, have combined to remove from many home producers any incentive to concentrate on a high standard of productive and marketing efficiency. With alternative markets always available to the producer, buyers, for their part, have been in a weak position and unable, individually, for fear of losing business, to pay differential prices to producers on the basis of the quality of the produce offered. They have customarily paid a flat rate by count, taking all risks, and since it may be assumed that the price they pay is fixed at a safe level sufficient to recoup them for absolute losses on inferior eggs, it follows that producers of the better class egg have suffered.

Leaving aside those countries which have introduced marketing reforms in order to safeguard a valuable export trade, it is of interest to find that Canada was confronted with and faced the same problem ten years ago, primarily in connection with her domestic trade. The Dominion Department of Agriculture, after careful investigation, came to the conclusion that the reason so little improvement was being shown in the quality of market eggs was the fact that the prevailing system of marketing placed no premium on quality; the system rather than those engaged in it was to blame. Payment for supplies on a quality basis was, therefore, recommended, but difficulty was experienced in carrying it into effect because, at that time, Canada had no recognised standards for eggs. Each market and, in most markets, each buyer adopted his own system and confusion resulted. Standards of weight and quality were accordingly drawn up for Canadian eggs and, subsequently received the force of law.

An increasing number of those engaged in the production and distribution of home produced eggs in England and Wales feel the necessity for action on similar lines in order to raise the average standard of the egg produced and marketed here and so to enable the home product to compete on even terms with imported supplies which, in many cases, are only allowed to be sent to this country if they comply with legislative requirements,