

BUTTER

maintains itself remarkably well. Supplies each week are fully taken up and this keeps the market steady. State creamery pails are quoted at 26c. and State dairy at 25c. Lower grades run down to 20c., but it is seldom that anything, however poor, sells below that. There is no doubt that the strict enforcement of the law against oleo. has kept butter from declining this spring. It is early yet to give any forecast of the market for this article. The increase in the patronage of the cheese factory will no doubt help to steady the market for dairy butter.

In New York butter is quoted at 22 to 26 cents per pound. Eggs 16½ cents.

In Montreal prices are as follows:

Cheese—The result of last week's trading has probably been to put cheese down a quarter of a cent for outside values. The cheese that is being sent in to this market is not being taken up very briskly. Shippers supply their needs in the country. We quote at 8½ to 9 cents.

Butter—A sale of fine townships for the lower ports is reported at 19 cents, and it is almost impossible to make more than 20 cents for the finest. We quote: Fine new townships, 19 to 20 cents; medium, 17 to 19 cents; new Western, in rolls, 18 to 20 cents; in tubs, 17 to 18 cents.

Eggs are quoted at 14 to 15 cents, with a well-supplied market and prices declining.

In Toronto, butter is quoted at 18 to 22 cents for pound rolls and 14 to 16 cents for large rolls. The combine sold eggs at 12½ cents, but outsiders got 13 to 14 cents. The former are, it is said, paying 12 cents in the country, and in selling at 12½ cents are making a loss of ½ cent.

A NEW YORK VIEW ON BUTTER.

Messrs. David W. Lewis & Co., of New York, write as follows in the Utica Herald: "It was the coldest April in 17 years, and appears as though it would be the coldest May within the memory of man. Stock in many instances is turned out this spring about as thin as we ever saw it. This cold weather and scarcity of fodder, may be the underlying cause of the light receipts here, which has kept the prices up and the floors bare of butter. There are no low grades here, and next to nothing with which to supply Central American, African, West India Island and other low grade trade. Legislation as to oleomargarine has put up the price of low grade butter here above its value in other countries, and may lose to us this trade, which formerly depended upon the odds and ends of our market for its supply. Legislative interference with the natural laws of commerce may be classed with 'curses that come home to roost,' and it really does not seem to have been worth while, for the sake of putting up the price of butter, to 'kill off and destroy this outlying low grade butter business, which added its proportion to the prosperity of the general dairy interests of the country. The four cent duty on Canadian butter is another legislative helper which has acted as a stopper upon Canadian dairy butter production, and stimulated that country into the combination cheese factory system, under which they compete with us with a quadrupled competition in the English markets. That congressional legislative act has come 'home to roost' after it has in part bred a cheese production in Canada which is sharply rapping us over the knuckles. We wouldn't have this Canadian dairy butter coming across the line, and its forceful volume of milk has quadrupled and it now, in the shape of cheese, stands up for its rights in the Liverpool and London markets in sharp competition with us."

It may not have been conclusively proved, says Hoard's Dairyman, that it costs as much to produce a pound of dressed beef as a pound of butter, when all the beef of an animal is reckoned; but we have no doubt at all that it costs more to produce a pound of sirloin, or best round steak, than it does to produce a pound of butter on the same soil. Besides this, the beef animal is dead and done for, and the cow is on deck, ready to repeat the process.

Family Circle.

MYSTERIOUS MISS ALISTER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A WILFUL YOUNG WOMAN."

"Wanted: a lady of refinement and education, as companion to an invalid during the next twelve months. Age under thirty. Salary liberal. Duties irksome."

This was the advertisement the Denbighs put in a morning paper, when the "office" sent them hastily off to Lisbon for a year, and left, as mistress of their pretty place in Surrey, Mrs. Denbigh's delicate widowed sister.

There was no possibility of Mrs. Dwyne going with them. Doctors and common sense said "No" to that, so at Ashby she prepared to stay, and the only arrangement to lighten her solitude their united wits could contrive was embodied in the lines above quoted.

The invalid herself insisted on its last clause, so the Denbighs counterbalanced it by its forerunner; and either the bane was not sufficiently alarming or the antidote was overpoweringly attractive, but the morning after the notice appeared, no less than sixty-three answers were piled up on Mrs. Gwynne's breakfast-tray.

"Oh! to think I must disappoint so many," lamented the kind woman, regretfully laying aside some half-hundred missives; "I should like to send all these a little present."

"Nonsense, Mary!" laughed her practical sister-in-law; "do keep your thoughts to the point. Which of these odd dozen do you think seems likeliest to suit?" And cogitation presently determining on three, that number by the end of the week reduced itself to one, who might really have been made to fit the situation.

She was twenty-eight; undeniably a lady; graceful and quiet. Clever, by the amount of her accomplishments; and the highest references from families in different parts of England testified that Miss Alister had always quitted them of her own free will, and invariably to their regret.

Indeed, I am afraid you must be fond of roving," said Mrs. Gwynne to the young lady, and between her in a peculiarly winning way of her own. "I hope you will not be running away from me before our year together is completed."

The color rushed over Miss Alister's face. Her eyes sank. "I will not go, I assure you," she said, most earnestly, "if I can anyhow remain. Oh! I hope I shall not have—"

"Perhaps she is not sure whether I shall be too irksome," was her after-comment to her sister. "I hope it's not that, for though I can't quite make her out, I really like her very much indeed." And this comfortable conclusion arrived at, preparations were pushed forward, and a fortnight later saw the "Lindens" left to the care of the widow and her new companion, "mysterious Miss Alister."

It was rather too bad, but so Mrs. Gwynne's friends, playing on the note of her first impression, persisted in calling the young lady, and between jest and earnest many were the inquiries made in crossing little Ashby as to whether the new-comer had extended any confidence to her employer as to home, relatives, or antecedents of any kind.

The widow, though the mildest of women, became rather exasperated after a time by this influx of innuendo and surmise, and felt somewhat worried at not being speedily able to announce that she knew all about Miss Alister's history, and it was as commonplace as most people's. This pleasure, however, evaded her grasp precisely as her companion made her desire it. Every day Miss Alister won upon her regard. She was so thoughtful, so patient, so ungrudging in care and tenderness, when hours of suffering imprisoned Mrs. Gwynne to her couch: so ready to catch the first signs of returning ease, and lure them on by cheerfulness or music—her voice was singularly sweet and sympathetic so entirely, yet unobtrusively, the womanly friend the invalid needed, that Mrs. Gwynne was ready to unveil all her own life to her companion, and yet—and yet to her chagrin, no answering candour was she ever able to extract. Provoked though she felt at the conclusion, she was driven to confess Miss Alister was mysterious!

It was February when this companionship commenced. By May not one iota nearer knowing anything of Miss Alister's story—if story she had—was poor Mrs. Gwynne. Then something occurred which increased her curiosity.

Up to this time no letters had arrived for the young lady; now three arrived by three successive posts: all—Mrs. Gwynne could not help seeing as she emptied the bag—in the same masculine handwriting; all from London, E. C.

With each of these communications Miss Alister's spirits seemed to sink. The steady cheerfulness Mrs. Gwynne, invalid fashion, was beginning to lean upon, for the first time failed her. The effort to preserve her usual front was too patent to pass unnoticed, and on the fourth morning, when Miss Alister's pale face betokened downright fear of the letter—outwardly facsimile of the other three—handed forth to her, Mrs. Gwynne could keep silence no longer.

"You have a persistent correspondent, if you will excuse my saying so," she remarked, handing out the unwelcome missive. "I hope your letters are not unsatisfactory, Miss Alister; but really you have not been looking yourself for a day or two."

Miss Alister, with changing color, was glancing through her communication. Now she crushed it

nervously up, gave one hasty look at Mrs. Gwynne's pleasantly anxious features, then seemed to take some quick resolve.

"I am quite well, thank you," she said slowly. "My letters are—only what I was suspecting—but—"

"—crimsoning as she turned her head away—"will you mind my making an unreasonable request?" ("Wants to go!" thought poor Mrs. Gwynne, in dismay.) "I have not been quite three months with you, but would you mind my having a quarter's salary? I—I—want it."

"My dear girl, you can have it and welcome," answered the widow, immensely relieved. "Would you like a cheque or notes best?"

"Notes," faltered Miss Alister, with unnecessary shyness.

"Notes you shall have, then, directly after breakfast—and, pray, if you want anything else in any way," emphatically, "do ask me directly, for I feel I cannot repay half you do for me with mere money." And the kind woman, thinking some little outstanding accounts at her last situation must be at the root of this embarrassment, stooped to bestow a re-assuring caress on Miss Alister's close-clasped hands. To her surprise they trembled, so did the voice in which the earnest thanks were spoken. A pair of eloquent eyes looked up, as though they longed to tell the secret of this agitation; but mutely they fell again, and Mrs. Gwynne felt more mystified than ever.

That same evening Miss Alister brought Mrs. Gwynne a tiny case.

"Will you keep this for me?" she said timidly. "It was my mother's. If—if anything should happen—if I could not fulfil my time with you, I think it would repay what you have advanced me."

"My dear," cried Mrs. Gwynne, "I want no such security; why, this pretty ruby ring is worth ever so much. I won't have it. Keep it yourself. As it was your mother's, you ought not to part with it."

"Please take it for a little time," Miss Alister pleaded. "I feel as though it—as though I—were safer so;" and she was so urgent that Mrs. Gwynne yielded, and with amiable cunning turned from the subject with the question—

"Is it very long since you lost your mother, Miss Alister?"

"So long, I barely remember her," was the answer.

"And your father—?"

"Died just a little sooner."

"Poor girl! But you had relatives to live with?" (Mrs. Gwynne felt she was getting on now.)

"None near enough to wish for me."

"So who took care of you?" questioned Mrs. Gwynne boldly.

Her companion turned upon her a wistful smile, that softened her regular features into rare beauty. "Some one was found for me," she said; "some one always has been. We had little money, for my father's living was small, and—"

"—a confused blush filled in the pause—"but a distant cousin sent me to school. I was there till I could support myself."

"And have you no sister or close friend?"

"No, oh no, fortunately not!"

"My dear, why fortunately? You would be surely happier with some one belonging to you."

Miss Alister's grave smile faded. She opened a magazine.

"It is time for me to read to you," she said, and began forthwith, Mrs. Gwynne listening with divided attention, deeply desirous, for friendship as much as for curiosity's sake, of discovering what was the background of this attractive young woman's life.

After that episode, however, no more letters disturbed the placid life at the Lindens. Symmer glided by without furnishing more food for Mrs. Gwynne's suspicions than the rather curious fact of her companion's wardrobe being as sparingly replenished as if she were receiving the wages only of a housemaid. "Still, with no home or fortune, perhaps she had right to save," thought Mrs. Gwynne; and indeed the dark, noiseless cambrics did well enough for a nurse, which was what Miss Alister really was through hot July and August, and week after week the companion earned her salary with a care as devoted as if it had been paid with affection instead of gold.

"But you must make me get well now," cried Mrs. Gwynne excitedly one morning, as Helen Alister entered her room. "For my brother Herbert is coming back from India for six months; he is colonel now, and the dearest lad—oh, what nonsense! I forget I am nearly forty and he is two years older. My husband was his great friend out in Calcutta. What he was to us through that—that dreadful time, and when my health broke down, none can tell. Now I feel as though it will make me strong to see him again. We must find him lodgings near, and get ready for him. And oh, Miss Alister—"

"Yes?"

"Do allow yourself a pretty dress or two! Though he is an old bachelor he never fell in love in his life, yet he has a keen notion of how a woman ought to look; so shall you and I go shopping next week?"

Miss Alister blushed. "Yes if—if you wish," she stammered; "if—if—that is, when you kindly give me the money."

"Why, good gracious! what have you done with last quarter's?" Mrs. Gwynne was nigh exclaiming. Luckily she stifled the words, and in the hurry of preparation for her brother, lost sight for a time of the strange impecuniosity implied by her companion's remark.

With the first week of September came Colonel Grant to the Lindens, and a new element entered