



## Yes, We Have No Bananas—And Not Much In The Way Of Oranges. Pyjamas, Eggs, Biscuits. Honey. Or Knitting-Wool

"HAVE you any honey yet?" "I'm sorry, not till this season's comes in."

"Have you any biscuits to-day?" "I'm sorry, none left. We got some last Thursday, but they sold out pretty quickly."

"I'd like some pyjamas for a boy of nine. What can you show me?" "Pyjamas? I haven't had any for several weeks now. You won't get a pair in town, not any size."

"Did you manage to get any oranges?" "I tried every fruiterer in town, and there wasn't one to be had."

"Any apples?" "I couldn't find any, though I did hear there were a few cookers in some shops."

"Have you been able to get any knitting wool?" "I managed to get some rather thick grey wool for Jim's winter jersey, but you just can't get anything for little girls. Khaki and grey, that's all."

**T**HIS is the sort of thing that we have been hearing all the time in shops and on trams and even in the quiet fastness of our own homes. What can you get? What can't you get?

Looking at the crowds out for a day on the beaches and the hills, wearing what can best be described as a post-prandial look, we decided that whatever the shortages were, they had not detracted much from the generally pleasant business of Christmas. Tommy did not look as though he had suffered through having to wear a pair of Dad's pyjamas cut down, and baby Sue looked adequately plump on brains and liver instead of the usual supply of eggs. Even the shortage of oranges had not given a haggard and vitamin-starved look to the crowds who surged beachwards in search of Vitamin D. All the same, we decided to search out some Government officials to try to get the Truth About Shortages.

We made a mental division of goods into three categories: goods produced in New Zealand, goods produced in New Zealand from imported materials, such as cotton goods, boot polish etc., and

goods produced abroad and imported, such as oranges and hardware.

### Bad for Bees

Our first questions were about those products that one might legitimately expect to find in a land reputed to be flowing with milk and honey. What about honey, eggs and biscuits?

"The honey position certainly is abnormal," we were told. "This is, of course, partly due to war-time conditions, supplies to troops, and the large quantities that have been packed specially for prisoners-of-war parcels. The

that, but eggs were raised in price two-pence a dozen last year to encourage production.

### What About Biscuits?

So we turned to biscuits. Why have they vanished?

"The biscuit factories are all fully employed making cabin bread for export to the forces," was the reply.

We admitted that biscuits were a luxury, and asked about oranges.

"Before the war we were getting oranges from Australia and the Islands, and when the season for those was over,

oranges were imported from California and Jamaica. Now these last two sources of supply have been cut out mainly because of shipping, and Australian oranges are

short because very large quantities of oranges are used for the troops in New Guinea. We can't get the boats to carry fruit from America and the West Indies. This leaves a big gap during the off-season in Australia, and makes it necessary to earmark supplies for those who most need them—babies and the sick. This applies to bananas, too, at least so far as shipping space goes."

We remembered seeing a baby coming away from the Plunket rooms the week before. Tucked up at the foot of the pram were half a dozen oranges, and we agreed that if there was a shortage, it was fair enough that small children and invalids should suffer least.

"Well, what about golden syrup, that very useful substitute for sugar and jam? Why has that been so short?"

"Golden syrup has no business to be short," came the reply. "There is, or should be, as much golden syrup as ever. The only real shortage is containers. If grocers would buy syrup in bulk and get customers to bring their own containers, there should be no difficulty in getting it. Of course it's a messy business, and grocers often have not the time or the assistants. But the golden syrup is there to be marketed."

### Where's the Wool?

Well, that was good news—for us if not for the grocer. So we went on to find out the truth about pyjamas, boot polish and knitting wool.

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## SOMETHING ABOUT SHORTAGES

main shortage, however, is due to the fact that last season was one of the worst we have had for years. Unless there is a certain minimum of sunny weather, you don't get the honey, and if it is windy, as it was last year, then the bees get blown about and don't get back to the hives."

Remembering last summer, we felt a certain sympathy for the bee, out in the wind and the rain doing his little bit for New Zealand and then finding that the flowers hadn't honeyed after all, and that when he tried to make his beeline back to the hive, the wind wouldn't let him.

### The Egg Shortage

Still, we can't blame the weather for the egg shortage. This is, as we realise, to some extent, local. The bigger cities have to supply troopships from time to time, and no one can complain of that. If we go short so that an American fighting for our safety can have that egg with his breakfast, then it is time to stop grumbling. But is this the whole story?

No, there is something else to blame. Eggs are expensive to produce: in material and labour. Again it has been decided that even if we do not get many eggs, they will be sold at a uniform and fixed price to protect us, the consumers. This raises the whole question of whether it pays to produce eggs at all—and no one could give us the answer to