

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

DAIRY.

TUESDAY, 12TH AUGUST, 1890.

Mr. THOMAS BRYDONE examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] What position do you occupy?—I am manager of the New Zealand and Australian Land Company. I can give the Committee some information as to our practice and experience in the Edendale Factory, Southland, in the manufacture of butter. The Edendale Factory was started about ten years ago by the New Zealand and Australian Land Company, for the purpose of the manufacture of cheese and butter on the American factory principle, because we were under the impression that dairy-farming was more suited for the Edendale property and for Southland generally than the breeding or fattening of stock, or the growing of grain-crops. With that object in view we started a factory on our own account, which cost about £2,500 at that time. It has cost more now. As we could not get farmers to take to the milking of cows at that time, we bought 350 milch-cows and milked them ourselves so as to get milk for the factory. That milk was made into cheese, which was principally sold in the colony and in the Australian Colonies at a remunerative price. I think we got as high as 8d. a pound for our cheese the first year. By-and-by, as the farmers got confidence in the factory system, they began to lease farms from us on the Edendale Estate, and we sold them cows on terms which enabled them to obtain sufficient capital to make a start. That system kept growing until now we get a sufficient supply from the farmers on the estate, and from adjoining settlers, to keep the factory in full milk: now we milk very few cows ourselves. In the summer time we get as much as from 2,400 to 2,500 gallons of milk a day. The price of cheese came down so much on account of other factories being started in New Zealand and in Australia also that it became necessary for us to export our cheese to the Home-market, and, as the cost of sending it there is something very considerable, and the price at Home has only been moderate of late years, the net result has not been so satisfactory as we could wish. With reference to our system of payments at Edendale, we endeavour to give the supplier of milk as full a price as is possible to be given; and the Edendale Factory has, up till now, always given a little more than factories elsewhere, as it is a matter of very little consequence to our company whether we get interest on the capital that is in the factory or not so long as we can give the farmers a price which will enable them to pay their rents. We prefer, of course, to get our rents paid regularly, and to see the farmers succeeding, to getting a big interest, or even any interest at all, on the capital in the factory. That is but a small matter to us. As the cheese which we had been sending Home sometimes arrived in what was considered bad condition, through getting out of shape, which we believed to be the result of too much butter or fat being in the cheese, we resolved to try what we could do, or, rather, what the result of making graded cheese would be. We take the cream out of 25 per cent. of the milk that comes in daily and make that into butter. The cheese is thus not so rich as what is called full-milk cheese, but we find that it carries very much better, as it is of a firmer texture. Since we have shipped the graded cheese we have had no complaint from London as to its arriving in bad order, nor have we had any losses in the factory through its getting out of shape or losing condition. We find the graded cheese is much easier handled and kept than what has been our experience with the full-milk cheese; and by making this graded cheese we expect to be able to get a bigger return from the milk than we had been getting before. We have the very best appliances for making the butter—cool and cleanly-kept rooms and an abundant supply of cool well-water for the working of the butter; and, although we were not able to secure butter-making experts, still we have men who seem to take every care, and who are as good, I believe, as it is possible to get in the colonies. In the winter season we convert the whole of our milk into butter, as the price of butter in the winter is, of course, always higher than it is in the summer, and that we sell in the local markets—Dunedin and Invercargill—getting a remunerative price for it—say, from 11d. to 1s. 3d. a pound, which, I believe, is about 3d. a pound above the price of the ordinary farmers' butter. The butter has always been very highly spoken of, and it is considered better, both by private people and hotelkeepers, than the ordinary butter they get, otherwise they would not, of course, give us an extra price for it. This shows that in New Zealand we can produce as good butter as it is possible to make. In the summer time we ship this butter to the London market, as, of course, there is not sufficient demand for it in the colonies; but unfortunately it has not turned out nearly so successful as we had anticipated on account of it deteriorating in quality between New Zealand and London, or between the factory and London. I have made every endeavour to ascertain through our Home people and the London agents what the cause of this is, but so far have been unsuccessful in arriving at any definite conclusion. Some time ago I was informed that butter exported from Wellington, which was made on the west coast of the North Island, had arrived in London in good order, and sold at over £5 a hundredweight. Thinking that I might possibly be able to pick up some information which would lead to an explanation of this, I have just paid a visit to some of the factories in the Taranaki District. I have seen their process and have made every inquiry as to their mode of butter-making and packing, but I have not found any sufficient difference in the process of manufacture to lead me to believe that there is anything in the making of their butter, and in the making of the Edendale butter, to account for the difference in