

up country, I think the storekeepers are too careless in the way they buy it. They do not make distinction enough between good and bad butter from different farms. If they were to pay the farmers according to the quality of the butter you would immediately see a considerable improvement in the make. There is no mystery about the butter trade; it is simply a matter of £ s. d. and, while a farmer gets the same price for his carelessly-made butter, there is no encouragement for him to improve. If the farmers want information on the making of butter the best thing is to have some practical butter-makers from the Old Country. With regard to the packages, the chief butter-salesmen in the London market find the packages of totara good enough. Naturally enough the wood must not be green. If you get a well-seasoned totara cask and keep it full of fresh water for seven days you will find that the wood, being porous, sucks up the water, and makes the cask as near air-tight as you can possibly wish it. After the cask has been full of water for about a week it should be sprinkled well inside with salt all the way round. The butter packed into the cask should all be of one churning, if possible. By having butter of two churnings you are likely to get two colours, which will immediately stop the sale of it in London. The best way that I have seen the butter packed is by pressing it down by the hand with two thick pieces of muslin. By doing that you get most of the moisture out of the butter. You pack it in such a firm state that the air does not affect it (only a little bit on the outside would be affected, not enough to be of any importance). It is desirable to get the packages of even weight, because that will save the exporter a lot of loss on average and tare. The Dutch butter-kegs are all stamped by the Government; and my experience in handling thousands upon thousands of these casks is that you could not find an average of more than one in the thousand as being overweight. They are nearly all alike. A hundredweight cask is 16lb. tare, and it is such an unusual thing that if a cheesemonger writes to his wholesale merchant that he has discovered a cask a pound or a pound and a half over weight the merchant generally sends some one round to see the cask. I just mention this to show the importance of a uniformity of weight of the cask. This is a small item, but you are liable, with all uneven-weight casks, to make a loss of 6d. or 1s. on the keg, and probably the butter trade would not allow such a margin. It is by the saving of these small expenses that you must look to make a profit. I have handled New Zealand butter which has left nothing to be desired for quality—the get-up of the butter and the packing. What I mean by the “get up” is: it has generally the gross tare and net weight marked on the outside. To all my clients I advise this, and where possible I give the preference in buying. When it reaches Home it saves the necessity of turning out a large number of casks to average them tare and tret. With regard to the shipment of the butter, the freezing of the butter kills it. I am one of very few men in the London market who can speak with authority on this, as some six years ago, for three consecutive seasons, the firm I was employed with put down a considerable number of casks in the Central Market cold-air stores of London. I had the salting of that butter in the store, and the selling of it to the butter- and cheese-mongers when it came out. The first lot we froze. I could not tell you the degree of frost, but it was the same as they keep the mutton, which would be pretty considerable. We found it kept the butter all right until it was placed in the shops, where, exposed to the heat and bad air, it went rank in a very short time. If a cask of butter was put on the counter in the morning, and was not cleared out at night-time, it would be all rank. The next season we put down some butter, and we kept it at a temperature of from 35° to 40°. The butter, on exposure, kept good much longer. I found this year at Home just the same thing. The butter I have just spoken about is Dutch butter, which has a considerable sale in the summer months in London. The great loss on the New Zealand butter last season was greatly due to the want of space in the ships, and I have noticed butter lying on the Wellington wharf for some considerable time owing to want of space. I have known considerable quantities of butter in the up-country stores which could not be shipped for want of space. That puts the butter into a very third- or fourth-rate class in the eyes of the London buyer. What is wanted here is a regular service—the storekeeper sending his butter away regularly every fortnight as he gets it, or even in less time if possible. Some of the butter I have seen here has been as fine as any made in any part of the world; but, owing to the long time that it takes on the voyage, it can only reach London as a second-rate butter until there is some other means of conveyance than freezing.

454. Do you think it advisable that butter should be graded here before shipment?—Well, speaking as an experienced man, that is impossible. Owing to the length of time between the grading here and the sale of the butter in London the buyers there could not take any notice of your grading. You would have to get a man to grade the butter who thoroughly understands it, and has seen it at the other side as well as here. I should simply say it is impossible, and it would be of no material benefit if it were possible. The man who pays for his butter in London is not going to have anybody else to judge it for him. A man who is tasting butter every day is not going to have Dick, Tom, and Harry to buy the butter for him. He buys it on his own judgment, and no other.

455. *Mr. Dodson.*] What about the grading of Irish butter?—Some years ago that had great weight with the buyers there, but since that time there has been such a revolution in the butter trade that it is simply put on one side, or, rather, they have not put it on one side but have gone round. They do not take any notice of it to any material extent.

456. They taste and judge for themselves, independent of the grading?—Yes. Another great thing to be observed in New Zealand butter is uniformity of quality. My experience is this: A buyer purchases, we will say, twenty-five kegs of butter of one brand. The first two kegs open very fine; they are worth £5 12s. The next keg does not open quite so well, and is worth £5 6s. That raises a doubt in the buyer's mind that there is worse butter in the parcel, and in a good many cases it stops that sale of the butter. You will see the necessity from a small item like that of keeping out the bad or the inferior quality of butter from the good parcel. If the New Zealand storekeeper wishes to make money through his butter trade he must cultivate a brand, and send a regular quality right through the season of that brand. He must keep up the quality, and the brand will