

year, butter, which I have reason to know has left the dairies in this district in equally good condition, has realised very much lower prices. It is a very great puzzle indeed to know the reason for this. So far as I have been able to ascertain, the market-price of good butter at Home is not very much different from what it was the year before last, and the complaints from our agents in England is that the butter has arrived in bad condition. I can see two probable reasons for this being the case, one being that this last season there was a great difficulty in getting the butter away promptly owing to the want of what is called cool-chamber accommodation in the direct steamers. Much of the butter that was sent from here, from Taranaki, Wanganui, and other outside districts, lay kicking about in Wellington and in other ports awaiting shipment, having been shut out of the steamers for which they were intended; but even those parcels which were got away without any trouble at all, as was the case the year before, also seem to have suffered in price. I am inclined to think, therefore, that the low price to a very large extent has been the want of care on the part of steamers in keeping the cool-chambers at the temperature at which they ought to be kept in order to deliver the butter in London in the condition in which it is put on board in New Zealand. I see no reason why there should not be some engagement on the part of the steamers in keeping the cool-chambers set apart for dairy-produce at the temperature which it is understood to be kept at, but as to which there has been hitherto no guarantee. I am of opinion that some alteration should be made, so that when shippers of dairy-produce pay the high freight that they have paid all through, and which I dare say they are willing to pay still, they should have some protection as to the proper maintaining of the required temperature of the cool-chamber just as the meat shippers have in connection with their shipments of mutton.

LETTER from Mr. G. M. ROBBINS.

DEAR SIR,—

Gore, New Zealand, 31st July, 1890.

There is yet much to do of improvement in the dairy industry of New Zealand. In cheese I do not think there is so much improvement to be effected in its manufacture as in marketing. Most of the factories of the South Island are making a first-class article now, and I believe many of those in the North Island. The cheese we send to England I regard as fully equal to that from Canada or New York State. The prices quoted from London by the leading cheese merchants confirm this: for example, at the beginning of our season finest Canada and New York State cheese is quoted about 3s. over New Zealand; as the season advances it is quoted at even figures generally; now, at the end of our season, New Zealand is quoted 3s. over Canada or New York State cheese. The system of marketing cheese is, I think, very unsatisfactory. It should be consigned to dealers direct in the trade, who sell it to retailers and consumers.

The care of dairy-produce by the steamship companies seems very lax, or we should not hear of cheese shipped in cool-space arriving in London in a heated condition. Is there no way of insuring against this, or getting the steamship company to guarantee? Dealers to whom it was consigned could tell as soon as it was in port by sending a man on board and opening a single case, and, if heated, the merchant knows at once how much it reduces its value, which loss should be paid by the steamship company. The freight on cheese is out of proportion to mutton— $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per pound net weight should pay as well as 1d. per pound for mutton, as 2cwt. of cheese would only occupy about the same space as one carcase of mutton, and the expense of refrigerating should be much less. I do not think fault would be found about heated cheese if good sound cheese was handled as follows: Load them in cool-space, but leave temperature natural till tropics are reached. When temperature rises to 55° Fahr. introduce just enough cold air to keep the temperature between 45° and 50° Fahr. right through to end of voyage. If when rounding Cape Horn the temperature falls below 45° Fahr. some means should be used to keep it up to about that point.

Butter I consider bad. Not even the butter made at the Exhibition, of which so much was said, would win many points with good butter and competent judges. I do not say I could better it. I enjoyed a first-class reputation as a butter-maker in the United States, but have not done anything in that line in New Zealand. There may be something against its being properly done here yet. I believe it can be done, and with good success. I have seen a fine sample of long-keeping butter made at the Otama Bridge Dairy-factory in June, 1888. I set and put in operation one of our separators at the above factory, and in trying the machine we put through 250 gallons of milk. The manager, after allowing the cream to ripen, churned and worked it up. Being late in the season, it had a turnip flavour, but developed no rank flavour, so common to butter in general here, although it lay openly exposed and uncovered in the factory for fully six weeks. I know the want of ice or very cold spring-water would be a great obstacle in summer time; but refrigerating-machines can now be had fairly cheap, and I should say that the use of them was the only way to assure success in butter-making in New Zealand.

Our factories are good. Still, there are some details that should receive more attention when building, as our climate is different to most any other where cheese is made.

I think many will be disappointed in what they will derive in the way of benefits from the dairy association. I think very little of it, as I understand it; but really know little of it. The idea of classing cheese here in New Zealand I think wrong. With so long a voyage as it has to make to market, it is sure to change some, and different factories' make will make different changes. In our case, the merchant to whom the cheese is consigned must and will do the classing. In my mind, we want a Government brand to use with our factory brand, to show the consignee the cheese is full milk, or one-quarter, half, three-quarter, or full skims; and the instructor could see that each factory was putting on a brand that corresponded to the quality they manufactured. I wrote for particulars of the working of the New York State Dairy Association, and intended to have it published in the leading journals, but have not received it yet. It is a very satisfactory organization, and perhaps would suit in New Zealand.