

with non-conducting material and fitted with exhaust-fan and pipe from cold-air machine, so that a constant ventilation, cooled in the tropics, could be kept up in the fruit, and to ask if this can be done at a cost of 3s. per case to London if this and the Derwent Valley Association will guarantee, say, 20,000 cases for each boat so fitted." And I can furnish the Committee, if necessary, with full reports of the proceedings of these meetings and the statement of Mr. Shoobridge, with whom I am personally acquainted, and who went to England for the purpose of making inquiries into the whole subject. All these things I consider important for us, for they are facts for our guidance in this colony. I think we can very well afford to follow the example of Tasmania in these matters, and there is little doubt we would benefit largely by their experience over there. There are several very interesting facts connected with the grading, classifying, and packing of fruit which ought to be generally known: these are nearly as important as the fruit-growing itself. There is no question about it that the business of growing and exporting fruit, to be profitable, should be conducted upon a pretty large scale. Not but what I delight to see the small fruit-grower, such as the ordinary farmer, having a good orchard connected with his farm. I think every farmer ought to have a certain number of fruit-bearing trees, by means of which he could supply his family with fruit. But as a special industry it must be undertaken upon a large scale to make it pay. The markets of the world are open to us. The American market is a better market for us than even the London market. The shorter distance and shorter time occupied in crossing over to San Francisco are in favour of America: the distance and time are just half what is occupied in getting to the London market. The freight also is one-half of what it is to London.

115. *Mr. Marchant.*] Is there a duty charged on it?—No; not on green fruit.

116. *The Chairman.*] That is in contradistinction to dried fruit?—There is no duty on green fruit.

117. *Mr. Walker.*] But there is on dried fruit?—I think there is. I shipped a quantity of fruit to America, but, owing to want of attention on the part of the officers of the ship, the fruit being placed in the hold—not in a cool-chamber—it sweated, and, although only three weeks in crossing to Frisco, fifty per cent. of it was almost destroyed; but the remaining portion fetched good prices. The fruit was much admired, both for colour and flavour. Regret was expressed that it could not be sent there in larger quantities, for there is almost an unlimited market in the large cities of America, and there is plenty of money to buy it. They would be prepared to take all the fruit we could send them during three months of the year.

118. *The Chairman.*] During that three months of the year, I suppose, they have very little fruit of their own?—They have none. As I have said, the market would be almost unlimited, not only in San Francisco, but in New York and other places, and even in England, to which the fruit would find its way; and it is sent as far as Sweden, so much is fruit sought after at particular seasons of the year. I have here account sales from London, by which it will be seen that the prices obtained are very good indeed.

119. You say the prices are satisfactory?—Yes; very satisfactory: but experience will have to be brought to bear upon the practical fruit-grower to enable him to judge what kinds he should ship. It is a mistake to suppose that the late keeping kinds are those which should be shipped either to America or London. We ought to ship in March, April, and May, so as to arrive in England while the fruit is not ripe there. Cox's Orange Pippin, the Ribston Pippin, the King Pippin, the Gravenstein, the Shepherd's Perfection, the Ohinemuri, are kinds very suitable. I have not gone through the whole list. They have not arrived at full maturity in March, but they are forward enough for us to ship them so as to arrive in London in time to hit the market. After the month of May the small fruit comes in, and that checks the sale of this kind. I have seen even in Auckland American fruit fetch good prices, but when the strawberries come in the demand slackens for American fruit.

120. You say March: what time in March?—About the end of March. We are somewhat behind Tasmania—about a month behind. Tasmania can ship before we can. That circumstance, of course, is rather against us for the English market. It is not the case, however, for the American market: there we have the advantage. I wish particularly to bring before the Committee important information selected from various sources which I have here, having reference to the fruit industry as an industry, relating to the grading, classification, packing, and packing-cases—in fact, everything connected with the business. There is an excellent article in a new work on the subject entitled "California Fruits," which contains the latest information on the subject as to canning, drying, preserving, &c. This article, which is not very long, ought to be printed for the information of people in New Zealand. I think it would be interesting to all fruit-growers in this colony.

121. *Mr. Walker.*] A point I wish to direct your attention to is as to a practical means that we might recommend to the Government for adoption by which the industry might be assisted. What practical help might be given to the industry in making our report to the House?—The Government of Tasmania was requested by the fruit-growing associations there to arrange, in their contracts for mail-services with steamship companies, for a proper kind of cool-chamber, which is very minutely described in their report—a chamber with the air passing through it, and to be kept at a certain temperature; also as to the freight to be paid per bushel for carrying and landing fruit in London. Hitherto it has cost about 7s. 6d. a case on fruit. I think it could be done for 3s. if the Government could be got to interest themselves in the matter.

122. In Tasmania the fruit-growers are a very large and influential body?—They are men, we may take it for granted, who know what they are talking about. I know the extent of the industry there: it is between 400,000 and 500,000 cases.

123. We have nothing of that sort in this country?—Not yet. I have sometimes heard people say, "You have no back country to Wellington." I may say that in passing through I observed a great deal of country very suitable for fruit-growing. All the land about Shannon, in the Manawatu district, appears very fit for the purpose. I have been very much impressed with it.