

our interest to keep up the standard of our mutton by shipping nothing but what is really first class, and so retain the favour and confidence of the English consumer.

The discovery of freezing has been a providential thing for us here in providing a market for our surplus, and for the masses in England in providing them with cheap food. But for the three millions of sheep that England gets from the Australian Colonies and the Argentine it would have been so dear as to have been beyond the reach of the majority of the working-classes, and there is no doubt about this: that many families now use meat that never saw it before, and there are many still who use little or none that, with a small reduction in the price, would be consumers. It looks quite probable that we may have to submit to a reduction of from $\frac{1}{4}$ d. to $\frac{1}{8}$ d. in the price during the next year or two, but that will increase the consumption, and in the end the supply and demand will regulate each other.

In talking of the future, the question of costs will have to be carefully kept in view by the shippers, and it is not unlikely that further reductions in freight may be demanded, especially as at present we are paying 1d. per pound, against $\frac{1}{8}$ d. charged by the same shipping companies from Australia, the assumption being that if they can carry for the lower rate from Australia they can do so from here.

Altogether there are now some ninety vessels carrying frozen mutton in the world, with a capacity of five and a half million sheep per annum, which indicates that the trade has not been an unprofitable one for the shipowner.

And now just a word about the cross best adapted for exportation. Breeders differ widely in their opinions, and men generally favour the sheep they have been most accustomed to. A good deal also depends upon the nature of the country, as one breed of sheep will thrive well where another would starve. Having had very considerable experience in breeding cross-bred sheep in Canterbury and Otago during the last quarter of a century, and having experimented with most of the popular breeds, the result of our experience has taught us to favour the Border Leicester cross as the most profitable all round. The Border Leicester, as now produced in New Zealand, is a very different sheep from the Home Leicester, as he has been bred with an eye to producing wool as well as mutton, whereas at Home they look principally to the carcase. We put the Border Leicester ram with the merino ewe, which produces a sheep carrying a profitable fleece and that fattens early, and afterwards we use the Leicester, excepting with ewes that may be light in their wool, and to these we put Lincoln rams. The Canterbury farmers who breed for export mostly favour the Leicester blood, although a few still prefer Lincolns and Downs. In the North Island Lincolns and Romneys have been most in favour, and that may account for the difference in price between Canterbury and Wellington mutton.

Sir J. HALL said he thought that the paper they had just heard read was a valuable historical *résumé* of the frozen-meat trade as far as it affected New Zealand, and a very accurate one. He thought, however, that Mr. Brydone hastily took it for granted that the merino must necessarily be always considered at Home as an inferior class of mutton. He (Sir John Hall) ventured to think that the removal of that impression was simply a matter of time. Welsh mutton had at one time been unpopular, but it now brought high prices; and so he thought it would be with merino mutton; when it was better understood it would be considered as good a class of mutton at Home as it was out here. It certainly looked dark in colour; but when one got one's teeth into it it was excellent. Lord Onslow had taken a great deal of trouble to make the qualities of merino mutton known: he had sent Home to official and other circles a number of carcasses, and had published the replies he received on the qualities of the mutton, and one and all had said that it was a very superior mutton indeed. He (Sir John Hall) thought it was only the dark colour which militated against it. With regard to the prospect of the competition of the Australian Colonies and the Argentine in the trade with Great Britain, what Mr. Brydone had said about the Australian Colonies was perfectly true—they might compete with us in half-bred mutton, but he did not think the Argentine would do so. He had travelled there, and had eaten the mutton, and he did not think the mutton grown there would in any way approach the New-Zealand-grown mutton. In the way of artificial grass, he had only seen two tufts of rye-grass during his stay. They grew lucerne to some extent. The natural herbage was very dry, and the mutton was very small and dry. He did not think there would be serious competition on the part of the Argentine, and certainly not in the matter of lambs. There was a great prospect before New Zealand in the export of frozen mutton, and he especially thought the prospects of the lamb trade very good indeed.

Mr. ROBERTS said that Mr. Brydone had stated that more attention ought to be bestowed in the North Island by breeders in the direction of providing proper winter food for hoggets. He quite agreed with that view, but it ought not to be forgotten that a large portion of the North Island was not adapted for growing winter feed. There was a great deal of steep country—country that would no doubt surprise their Australian friends in the other colonies if they were to travel over it—where Lincoln sheep could live. Lincoln sheep could live in some parts of this province and Hawke's Bay; but the difficulty was to find sufficient country without necessitating a large expenditure in the fencing-in of paddocks off which to get hay. Owing to the steepness of the country, and the expenditure required, that was in many cases impossible. He gave this information by way of explanation of Mr. Brydone's statement with regard to providing winter feed. In some instances they could secure winter feed, but in a great many instances they could not. In regard to Mr. Brydone's remarks about the grading of sheep, he might say the system at present in vogue was not altogether so complete as the well-wishers of the frozen-meat industry could desire. The weights of suitable sheep for freezing had been fixed at from 55lb. to 70lb.; but they knew that it was quite possible to get a long-bodied sheep weighing 55lb. which was a very poor specimen of mutton; and they might get a small and really prime sheep under 55lb.; so that it did not follow that 55lb. to 70lb. was a good standard grade. He knew instances where