

2. The Port of Manchester is the most convenient and cheapest distributing centre for a large district containing an immense population consuming vast quantities of frozen mutton, and beef, cheese, butter, tinned provisions, fruit, &c., and it is understood that the Australasian Colonies are desirous of obtaining increased facilities for the sale of such products in the United Kingdom.

3. Within a radius of twelve miles of the City of Manchester there is a population of over two and a half millions. That of the area to which Manchester is the nearest port amounts to seven and a half millions. This teeming population is mainly composed of working-classes, who earn abundant wages, are well employed, and are in the habit of consuming good food of all kinds.

4. Manchester possesses an important provision market, in which, for example, more butter is sold than in any other English market. There is not, in short, such an equally good field in the whole world as this district for pushing the sale of Australian agricultural produce.

5. It is, however, essential to the introduction of Australian meat and other provisions into this district that a market should be made for it. The produce must be made known before it can be appreciated and asked for by consumers.

6. Such initial work is the produce of and will have to be done by the seller. When a new seller wishes to get a footing in a market which is already largely supplied by competitors he will have to organize and undertake such initial work or he will not succeed.

7. It is necessary to emphasize this point, because, although after the arrival of the "Timaru" from Melbourne, in November, 1895, and the "Gulf of Siam" from Melbourne, in January, 1896, which vessels brought to Manchester altogether nearly sixty thousand carcasses of sheep, no vessels have since been loaded in Australia to Manchester direct—small quantities of sheep have been landed here from time to time by the "Gulf" steamers after calling at Melbourne—the falling-off is easily explained. The bulk of the "Timaru" and "Gulf of Siam" frozen meat was bought before arrival by Manchester importers, who, unfortunately, lost money by the venture, because, immediately on the arrival of the vessels, the Argentine shippers of mutton, who practically have the monopoly of this district, put their prices down for the time being to a very low point, with the result that the importers of the Australian mutton were compelled to sell out at a heavy loss. It should further be stated that the Argentine sheep are small, and, as the people of this district have become accustomed to small joints, it is necessary that Australian sellers should keep up a regular supply of their larger sheep until the people have become accustomed to them and appreciate their good qualities. A regular supply of Australian sheep in the market here would soon overcome this difficulty, but no other measure would be effectual.

8. The Canadian Government appears to have appreciated the fact that it is needful for sellers to make an effort to open up markets. About sixteen months ago Professor Robertson, its Commissioner of Agriculture and Dairying, visited Manchester and spent some time here interviewing the traders, inquiring into the facilities for distribution, and examining the accommodation of the port. He was undoubtedly convinced of the capabilities of this district for the consumption of Canadian produce, for he paid a second visit some months afterwards, and made further inquiries. The Hon. Mr. Fisher, Canadian Minister of Agriculture, also visited Manchester this year, and spent a day examining the facilities afforded by the port.

9. The result of these investigations was that the Canadian Government granted a subsidy of £8,000 per annum to a Manchester steamship company in consideration of its running a fortnightly line from Canadian ports to Manchester. The Canadian produce merchants have always been most vigorous in pushing their own interests here, and in studying the requirements and tastes of the population.

10. Pending the completion of three steamers, of 8,500 tons dead-weight capacity, specially adapted for the service (one of which has just discharged her first cargo at Manchester, and two others will soon be launched), four smaller steamers, of about 5,000 tons capacity, have been running from Canadian ports to Manchester. Eighteen voyages have already been completed, and the steamers not only got full cargoes, but merchants have been complaining that they could not obtain all the space they wanted. The Canadian Government has, therefore, so far, every reason to be satisfied with the result of its endeavour to increase the trade between Canada and this port.

11. In further corroboration of the consuming capacity of this district, it may be mentioned that regular services of steamers to Manchester have also been established from the principal United States ports (Boston, New York, Baltimore, Newport News and Norfolk, Charleston, Brunswick, Pensacola, Mobile, New Orleans, Galveston, &c.). These steamers are bringing full cargoes of produce in great variety.

12. In support of the statement that Manchester is a cheap and convenient centre of distribution, a statement is appended showing the relative cost of distributing produce *ex* ship London and *ex* ship Manchester. The following are some examples taken from that statement:—

Frozen Meat, <i>ex</i> Ship.				From London, per Ton.	From Manchester, per Ton.	Saving per Ton.
				s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
To Bolton	...	...	...	64 4	15 3	49 1
" Bradford	...	...	...	57 6	27 0	30 6
" Halifax	...	...	...	60 0	25 0	35 0
" Leeds	...	...	...	57 6	27 0	30 6
" Oldham	...	...	...	57 6	16 0	41 6
" Rochdale	...	...	...	65 0	16 0	49 0
" Sheffield	...	...	...	57 6	26 0	31 6

The London rates are inclusive of all dock charges, delivery to railway-wagon, railway-carriage, and delivery at destination within the ordinary cartage limits.