

1902.

NEW ZEALAND.

NEW ZEALAND PRODUCE:

LETTER FROM AGENT-GENERAL REPORTING STEPS TAKEN TO BRING NEW ZEALAND PRODUCE
UNDER NOTICE OF IMPERIAL AUTHORITIES.*Laid on the Table of the House by Leave.*

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Right Hon. the PREMIER.

Westminster Chambers, 13, Victoria Street, London, S.W.,

SIR,—

21st August, 1902.

I have the honour to furnish you with a brief report as regards the steps taken by me in respect to bringing New Zealand produce under the notice of the Imperial Government, with the object principally of obtaining orders from the War Office for supplies of the same to be sent to South Africa for the use of the troops engaged in the operations of the recent war in that country.

I venture to think that the Government would wish to have this report not so much for their own information (inasmuch as despatches which I have addressed to you on the subject have kept you fully acquainted with what has been done) as for that of the producers of the colony, who will no doubt feel satisfaction that, so far as lay in my power, their interests have not been neglected; and for this purpose a short report is obviously the most convenient mode, as it can hardly be expected that the large correspondence on the subject between this office and the Imperial offices, consisting of over four hundred letters, can be published.

I need scarcely point out that the official representatives of the colony in this country do not occupy the position of commercial firms, and cannot therefore approach the War Office or other Imperial Departments with direct offers of produce at specified prices, to be shipped at stated periods, so that in that respect they are at a disadvantage. They can only press upon the notice of the Imperial Government the description of produce which New Zealand can supply, and direct attention to its quality as being equal, if not superior, to that to be procured from other countries. And this I have not failed to do, while at the same time I have secured orders for an appreciable quantity of New Zealand produce.

Previous to the commencement of the war in 1899, I addressed a letter to the Colonial Office directing attention to the fact that New Zealand was the best market for procuring forage-supplies, such as oats, chaff, hay, &c., both as regards quality and economy in cost, giving detailed information as to the quantities that were available; and in the same letter I added that the Government of the colony were prepared to co-operate with the Imperial authorities in securing supplies, and would be glad through the Department of Agriculture at Wellington to arrange for the proper inspection of any such produce before it was shipped.

Oats.

The War Office forthwith availed itself of this offer, and accordingly I was able to advise you by cablegram of an order for 20,000 quarters of New Zealand oats, and to state that I had agreed, subject to your approval, that my Government shall arrange for the inspection of the same before shipment, and otherwise co-operate in the proper execution of the order. Thereupon I was glad to receive your cablegram approving of the steps I had taken, and stating that arrangements for inspection would be made. There is no doubt that the fact that the War Office could rely upon the Government in the colony to see that any produce ordered therefrom was shipped in proper order and condition was a direct inducement to its obtaining supplies from New Zealand. The quantity of oats ordered with respect to which the Government was asked through this office to arrange inspection has amounted to 163,000 tons, and in addition to this there were orders for 1,550 tons of oaten hay and sheaves. In addition to these I have obtained from the War Office orders for over 60,000 tons of oats to be placed in the colony by the Government itself, and of this amount over 40,000 tons were shipped to South Africa, on account of which I have collected from the War Office the sum of £387,102.

And I may note that one of the difficulties which have arisen in obtaining orders to be placed by the Government in the colony is the mode and time of payment. The War Office, as regards orders placed direct with the trade, require the produce to be delivered in South Africa before payment, whereas in the case of the orders given for execution by the Government it was expedient that payment be made f.o.b. in New Zealand. The War Office on my representations consented to pay on my certifying to the effect that the produce had been shipped, but, later on, delivery in