

attempt to be always improving the trade is one of the greatest evils that exist in the London market. Every new man who goes in to improve the trade has got to spend the first few years in learning what we have been twenty years in learning. Meantime much mischief has been done. If the meat could be concentrated in the hands of three or four who are chiefly interested in the Home market, the trade would then have the best chance it can have.

85. How do you view the idea of branding the meat and grading it at this end: I know the companies themselves grade, but how would you view the branding and grading of the whole of the meat of New Zealand before it was sent to the London market?—I think branding would be the greatest curse that could happen to it: it would be very bad indeed. Anything that would disfigure the meat would be distinctly bad.

86. Supposing it did not disfigure the meat?—It would be an expense without gaining any point whatever. When the meat reaches Home the butcher who gets hold of it does not care twopence what is upon it. He does not attach any importance to any brand that can be put on. He buys what he wants, and if he wants it will give full price for it. The consumer neither knows nor cares. He does not know where the meat comes from and does not concern himself about it. But anything in the shape of disfigurement would be bad, and if the branding is done it will prevent the meat being sold as English meat. To my mind I do not think I am endangering my soul in my desire to see every pound of New Zealand meat sold as English meat. As a matter of fact, it is not sold as English, and we never shall sell it as English meat. The proof of that is that no retail butcher would be found to buy English meat at 8d. per pound if he could buy New Zealand meat at 4d. which he could sell equally well. If he could palm off New Zealand meat as English he would do it and make the greater profit.

87. If, as you say, there is no use in having a distinctly New Zealand brand on our meat so that he who runs may read, why is it that prosecutions have taken place at Home, where dealers have been fraudulently selling River Plate mutton as New Zealand mutton?—I look upon all those prosecutions as “rot” and a great waste of time. There is no good done by them. I have already put it into writing, and repeat it, that the time will arrive when the River Plate people will prosecute us for selling our meat as River Plate meat. I saw River Plate meat opposite our own store, and it was in every respect better than ours. I do not say it is all like that, but they have some meat equally as good as the Canterbury sheep.

88. *Mr. Haselden.*] As a sheep-farmer, and also an exporter, do you consider a cross between a Lincoln ram and a Merino ewe would turn out a good sheep for freezing purposes?—It certainly would be a good sheep for freezing. It would not be so good as the Leicester cross. A Leicester is a very much better sheep than a Lincoln, and it is desirable, if you can, to keep every bit of bad blood out of a sheep. You cannot in Lincolns get rid of the difficulty of the fat being in junks in one place, whereas the Leicester will put it all over, and there is so much less lean in the Lincoln in proportion to the fat that it must deteriorate the value of the mutton. That is why all our North Island sheep must for twenty years be inferior to the best Canterbury, because we have nothing but the foundation of the Lincoln to work upon, and it takes a good many years to get through the first generation.

89. Is not the Canterbury Merino the best foundation?—Yes. The “comeback”—that is, the Merino ram with the Lincoln ewe—produces the most unshapeable carcass; it has all the faults of the Merino—the high shoulders and crooks on his back, every imperfection—although the crossing reversely with the Lincoln ram and the Merino ewe produces a shapely sheep, and the English butcher attaches so much importance to shapely sheep. I take it that a shapely sheep makes the best joints.

90. Would it be better to cross the Leicester on the Lincoln or on the pure Merino ewe?—To get the best freezing-sheep, and supposing every other condition can be carried out, there are cases in which the country must determine what you shall do. You cannot lay down a fixed law as to what every man in the colony should do; but, supposing the country to be suitable, I cannot imagine anything better in the present day, if a man can procure the Merino breeding-ewes, than to cross them with Border Leicester sheep, with a Down or a Leicester to follow.

91. We can get the Merino ewe cheap in the Hunterville district. Should we continue to work into the Merino ewe?—No.

92. We should work into the Leicester?—Yes, or go into the Down after all.

93. But Wellington and Wanganui buyers will not look at sheep with a trace of Merino in them?—That is the trouble. You do no harm in keeping the ewe as a Leicester. On the West Coast they will not look at anything with Merino blood in it because the country will not carry it: they go wrong in the feet. I think there must be something wrong about this matter. I have lost the run of my ordinary source of getting half-bred Merinos because they have always been paid more for by the Wellington buyers than I could give.

94. I saw in the papers that Mr. Donnelly was offered 9s. for sheep in Hawke's Bay, and they were sent to Addington and averaged 16s. 7d., the transit cost being 3s.?—It is a little difficult for me to answer that question, because it is known that Mr. Donnelly is very cautious in the way in which he speaks; but I think that on this occasion his memory must have played him pranks. I should suppose the real answer to the question is that at the commencement of the freezing season we started operations at 9s., which no doubt Mr. Donnelly was offered; but this price improved, and we offered up to 11s., and so on. He allowed a period to elapse between our offer, and the sheep gradually increased in value by growth of wool and so on, and the market improved in our district up to 3s., and then he quotes the price which he got.

95. If they cost 6s. in going down to Addington, that has nothing to do with the price there?—I reckon there is a difference at any time, owing to the price in the butchers' shops, on that basis alone, of 3s. to 4s. I have mentioned that before.

96. *Mr. Haselden.*] Would your buyer give the same price for a 60 lb. freezer as for an 80 lb.