

be much reduced. The New Zealand Government are talking about cold-storage in South Africa, so they could very well take up the question here with much benefit to the shippers. *Country Trade*.—Some time ago there was a proposal to endeavour to open up a trade in the provinces here by utilising the services of a salesman or traveller. I am now inclined to believe there is something in this. The chief necessity is, however, a regular supply of meat, and this at present we have not got. Provided this difficulty could be got over, good business could be done. There is no doubt whatever that the most profitable part of the business of those in the frozen-meat business here, such as Borthwick, Fitter, Fletcher, Eastman, and others, is in the orders they get from the country, where they are not subject to the keen competition of Smithfield. This would take a good deal of working-up if it was thought advisable to go in for it, but, once established, it would prove a possible outlet for our meat. Smithfield men have travellers going round, and issue a weekly quotation-list to their country customers, who send in their orders as they wish." Since taking up this question last Saturday I met Mr. William Grant, a gentleman who is well known to Mr. Flatman, the member for Geraldine, as a large shipper of meat, and he informed me that he had received very good returns from Glasgow, and that for nine months of the year the Glasgow market is a very good market, but that there are three months when the blackfaced sheep come in from the hills and the market breaks down. But we could ship to Glasgow to great advantage if we start shipping at the proper time. If we sent some of our shipments to Glasgow, Liverpool, and Cardiff, and also to Leith, Dundee, and Hull, we would not see such a state of things as I can show you here. Now, take the beginning of the lamb season—I am dealing more with lamb than with mutton, because there was a complete collapse of the lamb-market. In March last year we sent away 161,279 lambs, which brought 5½d.; in April, 260,863, which brought 5½d.; and in May, 311,353, which brought 5d. (4½d.). In June there was a still further increase in the shipments, for we sent 381,798 lambs which brought 4½d. In July our shipments were reduced to half, and the market did not recover from the enormous quantities sent away in May and June. In August we sent a considerable shipment of 229,990 lambs, when the market had been relieved by the small shipments in July, and prices recovered to 4½d. Now, I maintain that if one hundred thousand of those lambs had been distributed in the provincial ports we should have had 5d. a pound all the time, and I think any business-man in the trade would back me up in that statement. Now, the drop in prices in those three months was equal to ½d. a pound, and in May that drop represented £23,351 9s.; in June it represented £28,634 17s., and in July £12,061 4s.; or a total of £64,047 10s. for the three months. We lost that amount alone in lamb in the three months simply through dumping down so many carcasses on the London market at one time. If we had opened some of those provincial ports we could have sent some of these lambs to the consumers there, and if I went into mutton there would also be shown a very great loss. By shipping our meat to those ports we would not only improve prices for our meat, but they would be an opening also for our grain, dairy produce, frozen rabbits and hares, and butter. It is well known that Manchester is our best market for tinned meat, and wool exported could be shipped to the ports near the buyers' mills by steamer. Now, in grain, the Canterbury farmers had to knock off shipping by steamer to London because they could not dispose of it. I myself had a consignment there several years ago, and you would have thought it was a little village that it had been sent to because it was sold in such little lots at a time, and I was recommended to charter a sailing-vessel and grade the wheat and send it to some of those provincial ports, where I should have got far better results. If steamers were sent there each man could consign his produce, and it would be sold by itself. It would be of enormous benefit to the colony, not only for the meat trade but also for all our produce. Can any market in the world stand the like of this increase in our exportations last year? From January to August, 1901, we sent away mutton from Canterbury and other ports amounting to 1,236,656 carcasses, and in lamb 1,189,064 carcasses. From August, 1901, to August, 1902, we exported from Canterbury and other ports 1,381,199 carcasses and 1,515,551 lambs, or an increase of 144,543 carcasses of mutton and 326,487 carcasses of lamb. No market in the world can stand that. We are bound to send our stuff to fresh places. The Argentine people are sending cargoes to Dublin and Belfast, and distributing their meat all over Great Britain. Our produce is sent to the most expensive port in the world to handle the stuff, and not only is it expensive as a port, but our stuff is more liable to be damaged there by the extra handling it gets. Now, if the scheme I have suggested is carried out it can be done at no expense to the Government whatever, for we merely want a guarantee, and therefore where does the expense come in? And if there is any expense to be incurred the exporters of frozen meat would reap an advantage of 1s. a head, and if they had to pay 1d. out of that it would be a very small thing. It would cover the whole loss, and if it did not you could still put another penny on another year, so as to recoup the Government for any loss that might be made. The increase in the export of lamb principally comes from the North Island. The increase last year was only 93,000, and the increase in all the ports was 332,000, which includes both the North Island and any that were shipped from Southland. I have a letter from the London agent of the National Mortgage and Agency Company, dealing with the lamb trade, and it gives a very gloomy view of its future. This is a short extract from the letter received, which is dated London, 31st July. It is written by a large importer of New Zealand mutton, and he is referring probably to the Argentine competition in frozen lamb. He says: "Up to the present time prices for our frozen lamb have been very disappointing owing a great deal to its having been forced on the market by one or two large London consignees, who, with the object of keeping their butchers' connections, sold at lower rates than there was any need to, the sufferers, of course, being the shippers at our end." Of course our large consignments give these companies an opportunity to wreck the market. If we had not sent such large consignments they could not have done it. The letter goes on to say, "The Argentine also have shipped a great many frozen lambs this season, and I am credibly informed by their agents here that