

informed me that almost every package they had sent out lately to up-country towns was being returned on the score of inferior quality. I, however, did not wonder much at this statement after examining the boxes, for I found according to the date-marks that the butter was then about ten months old. I carefully examined a number of packages of the butter, and found it had deteriorated very much in quality, although the butter was well made in the manufacturing process. The butter possessed a stale, or rather tallowy, flavour. In fact, some of it could be termed rancid, and hardly fit for cooking purposes. I at that time advised the Department of Industries and Commerce of this brand of butter, and asked that the Dairying Division be instructed to bring the matter under the notice of the company or manufacturers.

If New Zealand producers do not get alive to the fact that it is just as important for them to send the very finest quality of butter, and that while new or in a fairly fresh condition, to the African markets, as it is to send it in the latter condition to Great Britain, they will, in my opinion, have no hope of competing successfully against the Argentine. I was informed by dealers in Cape Town and Durban that they had to pay more money for New Zealand butter than they were purchasing Argentine for, and that the quality of the practically fresh Argentine butter, which was being laid down in Africa in eighteen to twenty days, was preferred to our stored goods. A quantity of the latter was still held in the freezing-works, and was being placed on the markets in competition with the Argentine.

The only chance we have in competing with the Argentine is on the score of better quality, and I am confident that if our producers aim to get their butter on the African markets soon after it is made, the Argentine people cannot touch us so far as quality is concerned. I have examined a great deal of Argentine butter, and eaten it on the tables in various towns and cities in the Transvaal, Cape Colony, and Natal, and there are two things only in its favour: it is paler in colour than ours, which is preferred; it is also laid down fresher. On the other hand, the Argentine butter has the appearance of being poorly made; it has a very greasy appearance, almost resembling lard; it has no character, is almost void of texture, and I am confident if it was put to the test which some of our butter has had to undergo as described above—that is, if it was held for a whole year and exposed to all temperatures—it would, in my opinion, as an old experienced butter-maker, not be fit for anything else than axle-grease at the end of that time.

Although New Zealand butter has had hard luck on the African markets for the reasons above explained, it is a pleasure to a practical man to note how well it is made, the body, and texture. The general get-up, including boxes, branding, and finish, I do not think can be beaten in any part of the world.

I am pleased to be able to state that some of the later shipments of New Zealand's new season's make of butter which I examined in Africa opened up in excellent condition, and, as I have just explained, if our people would endeavour to send such butters to Africa, I reckon we are sure to get a good look-in against all competitors.

Amongst the brands which I examined, and which could be called choice (and I say this without in any way advertising them, but merely giving them credit for assisting in building up a reputation for New Zealand butter as a whole), was "Bell Block" (Anchor Dairy Association), "Eltham," "Taieri and Peninsula" (Dunedin), "Defiance," and "Pakeha."

Owing to the continued prevalence of disease in stock, and the slow manner in which the land is being settled with good British settlers in many parts of Africa, I have become convinced that there will be a large outlet for our dairy-produce for years to come. It will take a few years for Africa to produce enough milk to fill the requirements of the cities and towns alone, or, in other words, to produce fresh milk enough to take the place of the enormous quantities of imported condensed milk consumed at the present time.

One point which I have omitted is the question of wiring all butter-boxes for the African markets. This is very important. The timber used for some of the boxes is also too light to stand the rough handling.

CHEESE.

So far as cheese is concerned, we do very little business with Africa at the present time, and unless we adopt some better system of laying our cheese down in a sounder condition there is very little hope of our establishing anything like a decent connection on her markets. My investigations proved that the few shipments of cheese sent by us to Africa are landed on the wharfs in Cape Town and Durban in what might be termed a disgraceful condition. A large percentage of the cases were found to be in a filthy condition, and many of them broken. What is worse still is the fact that the cheese itself is seriously injured in quality during transit by being carried in the warm holds of the ships in what certainly is a hot voyage. The cheese is roughly carried as ordinary cargo, and the facilities for handling, &c., are very much inferior to the methods adopted for our British shipments. The above being true, it is only reasonable to expect that the cheese will suffer serious deterioration.

This rough treatment and severe heating of the cheese starts the butter-fat, and causes the curd to become dry and chippy, or in other words, crumbly. It seems also to develop a strong acid taste, and the cheese goes off flavour very quickly. Our cheese that goes to Great Britain which is carried in cool-chambers open up in fine condition, and instead of being dry and flinty it breaks down neatly and shows a proper texture; besides in the majority of cases it retains its flavour for a much longer period than when it is exposed to a high temperature. It is also free from cracks, and does not show butter-oil on the surface, as do our African shipments.

Recommendations.

Where there is a demand for large cheese, or, rather, when cheeses are sent to Africa weighing 65 lb. to 70 lb., the cases should be made of fairly heavy dressed timber, and they should be wired or strongly bound with $\frac{3}{4}$ in. galvanised hoop-iron, so as to stand the rough treatment which they are subject to on the steamers and wharfs. I would also advise having the battens