

The cablegrams sent each week to the Department of Industries and Commerce have during the year been somewhat amplified, the particulars given being fuller than formerly, and information concerning one or two new lines being added. These cables have given market details of mutton, lamb, beef, butter, cheese, hemp, and cooksfoot-seed regularly, while information regarding other lines such as fruit-pulp and hops have been included at intervals. Stocks of New Zealand hemp on hand, and quantities of Argentine mutton, lamb, and butter imported into the United Kingdom have also been cabled each month. During the wool-sales the prices and state of the market here have been supplied, and recently prices for Bradford cops have also been quoted at periodical intervals. Arrangements are now being made to supply regular quotations and particulars for kauri-gum.

The correspondence conducted by this Department has consisted mainly of replies to inquiries ranging widely over the field of New Zealand produce and commerce. In several instances newspaper and other misstatements regarding the colony's production, capabilities, &c., have been replied to.

The methods of inspection of New Zealand produce adopted in the previous year have been continued. Regular visits were made to the docks, and special attention was paid, on the arrival there of vessels, to the refrigerated produce. Extracts were made from the refrigerating logs showing the temperatures, &c., maintained during the voyage, these being supplied in reports to Wellington. Dairy-produce was also inspected in merchants' warehouses. Regular visits were made to Smithfield, and close touch was kept with the state of that market and with the distribution of New Zealand meat throughout the country. Opportunity was taken on several occasions of inspecting parcels of hemp that had been submitted to arbitration for quality, and information concerning this was sent to the colony with useful results.

During the year the managing bodies of the English and Scottish co-operative wholesale societies were interviewed at Manchester and Glasgow respectively in connection with proposals that these societies should enter into relations with the colony for the distribution of New Zealand meat.

Among sundry duties may be mentioned attendance at various shows, exhibitions, conferences, and meetings connected with producing and trade interests; interviews with business callers and visitors; and the regular perusal of a wide range of trade journals. In December a lecture was given on "Agricultural New Zealand" at the South-eastern Agricultural College, Wye, Kent, the college authorities having made a request to that effect.

During the year two steamers from New Zealand landed produce at west-coast ports. In July the s.s. "Rangatira," after discharging the London portion of her cargo, took a shipment of meat and oats to Cardiff (Barry Docks); and in October the s.s. "Rakaia" came direct to Liverpool with shipments of frozen rabbits, oats, butter, and sundry other lines, afterwards proceeding on to London. Full reports concerning these shipments, treating of the discharge, handling, and disposal of the produce, were made at the time and forwarded to Wellington. Only by the s.s. "Rangatira" was there any New Zealand mutton or lamb delivered at the ports mentioned. In regard to the latter shipment it is to be regretted that a considerable part of the same should have been purchased by River Plate meat companies for their trade. Those interested in the New Zealand meat trade in this country considered that the value of the direct shipment was very much discounted by this. The fact of River Plate concerns having to do the distributing of New Zealand meat was strongly commented on, it being considered that such a system of business did the New Zealanders no credit. For the visit of the s.s. "Rakaia" to Liverpool the rabbit trade was mainly responsible, as explained in the report mentioned.

For a considerable portion of the year I was absent from London. Having received instructions to proceed to the colony, I left here in the second week in May, and arrived at Wellington on the 17th June. For some time I was occupied in Wellington in giving evidence before the Extension of Commerce Committee, which was making investigations concerning the distribution of New Zealand meat in this country. At Nelson, Motueka, and Christchurch I met the fruit-growers and delivered addresses on "Fruit and Fruit-pulp on the British Market." Addresses were given by me at various centres in both the South and North Islands on "The Distribution of New Zealand Meat in Great Britain." I was also able to pay a hurried visit to the Wairarapa and Taranaki dairying districts, and to visit many of the dairy factories there.

The opportunities I had in the various centres visited by me of meeting and discussing generally with directors and others matters relating to the New Zealand produce trade has been of the greatest value to me in the conduct of the Department here. In being able to give information and to answer questions directly to persons interested, I felt also that I was getting more closely in touch than I had hitherto done with those whose interests I to a considerable extent represent here.

Owing to the time at my disposal in the colony being limited, it was impossible for me to visit all centres or to accept many of the kind invitations sent me to give addresses on produce matters. I regret that I was unable to visit the dairy factories in the South Island, and to meet the directors of them, as I had intended doing.

During my absence the work here was carried on by Mr. R. H. Hooper, who performed the duties intrusted to him in a highly satisfactory manner. The reports made by him and the cables forwarded were complete and full of valuable information. It was very pleasing on my return to find that the work of the Department had been kept by him fully up to date, so that I was able without any loss of time to again take up the threads of my work.

I have, &c.,

H. C. CAMERON,
Produce Commissioner.

The Agent-General for New Zealand, London.