

APPENDIX III.

SIR,—

Department of Industries and Commerce, Durban, 19th October, 1905.

I have the honour to submit a *résumé* of the work done by me since my report of April of current year.

All along business has been gradually getting worse in South Africa, and especially so in Natal; September was said to have been the very worst month for business for many years. The finances of the country are in anything but a healthy condition; although, as usual, there is a persistent clinging to the hope of better times. Some authorities insist that the tide has turned.

MEAT-TAX.

I have already informed you that there was an agitation in the country in favour of a meat-tax; I also expressed the hope that there might be some preference displayed towards the British colonies; the tax has been reimposed, but I regret to say that no favour has in any way been displayed towards the colonies. It was thought, and very strongly asserted, that the colony could supply its own beef; a blizzard swept over the country, and an enormous amount of stock was destroyed; since then there has been little talk about local supplies. Immediately on the imposition of the meat-tax there was a war of prices in connection with meat, and prices were cut to a very low mark; it was evident that this could not continue for a very long time. The immediate effect seems to be that small men are feeling the pinch already, and are selling out their business; it is reported that the Federal Cold-storage people are buying up a very large number of shops, and will very soon have the whole trade in their own hands.

NEW ZEALAND OATS.

Early in the year I had occasion to call the attention of the Natal Agricultural Department to a matter which tended to injure the New Zealand trade in this respect. In the report of experiments made at the Experimental Farm it was stated that the New Zealand oats did not germinate; after an inquiry had been made it was found that the sample referred to was not New Zealand produce at all, but some obtained from a local store. I managed to have a correction inserted in the Government Agricultural Journal. The matter may seem a small one in itself, but it gave rise to a great deal of comment among importers of New Zealand oats, and, but for the correction, might have done us a great deal of real injury.

There has been a great deal of discussion among such bodies as the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce and the various municipalities about imported fodder and oats as rivals to the local produce; the New Zealand oats are so much superior to the local oats, that in many instances these bodies feel compelled to buy them, although they urge that the local article shall be used where possible; this is of course what might be expected. At the discussion at the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce it was admitted that the New Zealand oats were the finest in the world.

NEW ZEALAND WHEAT.

Some shipments of New Zealand wheat have arrived recently, and I learn that very large quantities have been ordered to arrive; at the outset it was feared that the New Zealand article would be too soft for this country, it is however gratifying to find that so far the shipments have given every satisfaction. There should be a very good trade between the two countries if the samples and prices can be made to suit.

TRADE-MARKS.

In a country like South Africa the matter of trade-marks is one which calls for very careful consideration; there is a large trade with all parts of the world, and the competition is so keen that it is not at all wonderful if brands sometimes get mixed, intentionally or accidentally. For these and other reasons the matter of registration-marks has been considered. The decision arrived at here is that there is no protection to any trade-mark here unless it is locally registered.

COLD-STORAGE.

It is really difficult to say very much of a matter which must be of the greatest interest. The general complaint is that, from a business standpoint, the thing is largely a failure. The Government Cold-storage at Maritzburg could almost be had for the asking; Langham's Cold-storage at Delagoa Bay has never been used; on the other hand, Sparks and Young declared a dividend of £8,640. There is at present a move to amalgamate all the cold-storage companies, and there seems a very fair chance of them getting their way at last. It is very rare to stir the lethargy of South Africa in any respect until far too late to do any real good.

NEW ZEALAND BUTTER.

The position of New Zealand butter is well assured, and there seems only one condition of success, and that is the regular supply of first-rate quality; merchants are somewhat nervous upon this point since there is a talk about withdrawing the direct steamers; although there has been no drawing-back so far in the matter of orders, merchants assure me that there is an uncertainty about the matter. But, of course, that rests with the New Zealand people; a trade has been created, and in order to do that there had to be a great deal of effort put forward. The prejudice here against anything from Australasia is far stronger than the truth warrants. Quite recently a Cabinet Minister publicly stated that