

WAR OFFICE CONTRACTS.

During the year the War Office, following the visit of Colonel Hobbs to America for the purpose of making a report concerning the methods of slaughter and inspection in that country, decided to send an officer to New Zealand in order to inspect the refrigerating-works there, and to report fully to the authorities as to the manner in which the slaughtering and inspection laws are carried out.

Major Long, the officer appointed, left London last month. Due notification of his visit had been despatched to the colony.

MARKET IN GERMANY FOR NEW ZEALAND MEAT.

The question of securing a market in Germany for New Zealand meat has on many occasions been under consideration. Unfortunately, attempts made to open up trade in that country have hitherto been unsuccessful. During the year a large number of editors of leading German newspapers visited this country, when the opportunity was taken of interesting them in the question of the importation of New Zealand meat to that country. While it was found impossible, owing to the limited time at their disposal, to show and explain to them all that was desired concerning the trade in frozen meat, the editors were taken over the large cold-air stores in Southampton and shown the frozen meat stored there. Under your instructions I got leaflets concerning the New Zealand slaughtering and inspection laws, and also dealing with the importation of meat, printed in German, and these I distributed amongst the editors. By this means it was hoped that their interest in the question of the German meat-supply might be promoted, and that good might result to the New Zealand meat trade generally.

Several of the German editors expressed very keen interest in the question of the cheap food-supply of the German people, and since their return from their visit here the matter has on various occasions been referred to in the papers guided by these gentlemen, and numerous references to New Zealand meat have been made by them.

I have kept closely in touch with what has been going on in relation to this question, and have considerable hope that the opposition of the German Agrarian party, which is at present strong, may shortly be overcome.

SHIPMENTS OF LAMB FROM NEW ZEALAND.

Shipments of lamb were received from the Ruakura and Momohaki Experimental Farms, which, in accordance with your instructions, I placed, when received, in the hands of the C.C. and D. Co. (Ltd.) for realisation. The average price for the former lot, which were lambs of fair average quality, although some were inclined to be rather plain, was 4'41d. per pound, while for the latter—lambs of similar quality, but insufficiently graded—owing to the market having improved, 4'68d. per pound was obtained.

WOOL.

The market for wool throughout the year has been continuously firm, and prices high. Trade in the country has been brisk, and as manufacturers have been busy all lots coming forward have been eagerly purchased and at once brought into consumption. There has been no accumulation of stock, and at present the demand experienced is as great as ever, while the tone of the market gives promise of the continuance of the satisfactory prices that have been ruling. Slight temporary decreases in values have once or twice been experienced, but there has been nothing to cause any continued decline in quotations. The prospects at present are most encouraging for wool-growers.

HEMP.

The market for hemp during the official year has been an exceptionally firm one, with excellent prices prevailing. From the beginning of the twelve months, when the price for "good fair" grade was £32 per ton, with the exception of a week or two when 10s. per ton less was quoted, prices steadily advanced, until in January they had reached £40 per ton, the highest quotation recorded since the hemp trade became established. At the end of January and the beginning of February there was a difference of only £3 per ton between "good fair" New Zealand and "fair current" Manila. Prices are now, however, slightly weaker, and it is felt that the extreme rates for some time ruling cannot be continued.

The quality of the hemp received from New Zealand has generally been satisfactory. The proportion of "fair" grade coming forward from the colony has been considerably greater than it was a few years ago, while the quantity also has been increasing. Quotations for this grade are on that account now much more general on the London market than formerly.

While the grading has, on the whole, been satisfactory, one or two complaints have been made to me concerning it, and I have examined the lots brought under my notice. Particulars in regard to these were forwarded through you to the colony.

TIMBER.

During the past year an increasing number of commercial inquiries from various parts of the country have been received regarding the New Zealand timbers. The main cause of this inquiry no doubt lies in the fact that the supply of several leading varieties of commercial woods imported into this country has been shrinking in marked degree during the past few years, and the trade has been compelled to look out for fresh sources to draw on. A considerable degree of credit, however, may be attributed to the various exhibitions in the past two years at which New Zealand timbers have been prominently displayed and advertised.

One of the principal inquiries has been for a superior, fairly soft pine to take the place, among others, of the American yellow-pine, which has been rapidly becoming scarcer and dearer.