

[Standard, 4th December, 1907.]

NO MEAT-FAMINE.—NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIA CAN SUPPLY OUR NEEDS.

London is not likely to suffer from a meat-famine this Christmas. In case there is any shortage of supplies from America, New Zealand and Australia are prepared to keep the United Kingdom going.

The scare that has been aroused by certain newspapers is one that has been dealt with for some years past. It originated four years ago through a suggestion that Messrs. Armour and Messrs. Swift, the two firms who supply London with the greatest quantity of American-fed cattle, were about to combine. In reply to a query from one of our representatives, the London manager of Messrs. Swift and Co. said that the rumour of a combine to-day was as true as it was three years ago, two years ago, or last year.

The High Commissioner for New Zealand (the Hon. W. P. Reeves) told our representative that, should the American food-suppliers ever take it into their heads to raise the price of their goods, New Zealand and Australia would be only too pleased to take up the supply. "Of course, you quite understand," said Mr. Reeves, "we cannot send you all the beef you require, but you can quote me as saying that the supply of lamb from New Zealand is at present quite sufficient to keep the United Kingdom going, and that the supply is rapidly increasing. Australia, I believe, can send you a certain amount of beef, but New Zealand is ready and willing to give you all the lamb—or mutton, call it what you choose—that you want."

The manager in England of the Colonial Consignment and Distribution Company emphasized the High Commissioner's statement by saying, "We can give you enough in the shape of frozen meat to keep you going so long as the American dealers choose to shut you out."

[Daily Chronicle, 29th November, 1907.]

THREATENED MEAT-MONOPOLY.—AMERICAN TRUST METHODS IN LONDON.—HOW THE POOR WILL SUFFER.

Developments are taking place in London which may lead to the establishment of a monopoly in the import meat trade. How seriously this would affect the people of London, as regards their food-supply, will be realised when it is stated that 80 per cent. of the meat handled at Smithfield Market comes from abroad. This threatened monopoly in London is all the more serious in view of the recent announcement in the *Daily Chronicle* that an American firm has obtained a monopoly of the lairages in Manchester and in Birkenhead.

The American firm of Swift, who hold a commanding position in the American meat trade, have recently taken up the Argentine trade by acquiring the interest of the largest company doing business between the Argentine and London. The effect of this, one might think, would be increased competition and reduction of prices.

Simultaneously, however, with the enlargement of the sources of supply there is a decrease in the number of American competitors. The firms who practically control the American meat trade are Swift, Armour, Cudahy, and the Hammond Company. The Cudahy Company has retired from the business, and it is suspected that they have only done so through arriving at an understanding with Swift.

DOMINATED BY ONE FIRM.

Armour and Swift do not compete in England. The Hammond Company, which was reconstructed some time ago, is not a formidable competitor. All these various companies are arriving at an understanding which is dominated by the Swift interest, and which will lead to a monopoly of all the American and Argentine business, followed by an increase in prices.

A further disquieting factor in the situation is that the City Corporation Markets Committee has permitted the American to get a strong footing in the London markets as stall-holders.

The following figures for 1906 show the enormous amount of foreign meat which comes into London for consumption :—

					Value. £
Live cattle	..	..	..	(No.) 199,506	3,538,653
Live sheep	..	..	..	" 2,357	4,334
Beef	..	..	..	(cwt.) 1,559,479	2,583,147
Mutton	..	..	..	" 2,695,294	5,100,595

The bulk of the supply comes from the United States and the Argentine Republic, the former country importing no fewer than 139,831 cattle during the year. If an American-Argentine monopoly is established, the people will not need a parrot to tell them that their food will cost them more.

The following shows the import meat trade for the whole country during the same period :—

					Value. £
Live cattle	..	..	..	(No.) 558,561	9,688,946
Live sheep	..	..	..	" 103,359	156,947
Beef	..	..	..	(cwt.) 5,523,809	9,785,607
Mutton	..	..	..	" 4,082,756	7,645,935

Of these totals, the United States and the Argentine sent as follows :—

					Value. £
Live cattle	..	..	..	(No.) 398,338	6,929,156
Live sheep	..	..	..	" 84,184	127,401
Beef	..	..	..	(cwt.) 2,426,644	5,235,663
Mutton	..	..	..	" 2,670	5,274