

REPORT.

To the Right Hon. Sir J. G. WARD, P.C., K.C.M.G., &c., Prime Minister of New Zealand,
Minister of Industries and Commerce.

SIR,—

I. INTRODUCTORY.

I have the honour to report that, agreeable to instructions received, during your temporary absence, from the Hon. Mr. Hall-Jones, Acting Prime Minister, I left New Zealand on the 6th March last, per s.s. "Oswestry Grange," under engagement to your Government, "to visit the western ports of the United Kingdom for the purpose of inquiring into and reporting upon the possibilities of trade between this country and those ports." The steamer entered Avonmouth Dock on the 26th April. I continued my voyage on her to Liverpool (where she arrived on the 2nd May) and Glasgow (which was reached on the 11th May). My stay in the United Kingdom extended till the 21st September, when I took return passage on the s.s. "Cornwall" from Liverpool, reaching Wellington on the 1st December.

In addition to the west-coast ports of Bristol, Cardiff, Liverpool, Manchester, and Glasgow, I visited, during my five months' sojourn in Britain, the cities of London, Birmingham, Dublin, Belfast, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Dundee, besides over thirty different towns in England, Scotland, Ireland, and the Isle of Man; and in most of these places I made inquiries and collected information from merchants, municipal and dock authorities, secretaries of Chambers of Commerce, and others, bearing on the subject of my mission.

A considerable time was spent by me in calling upon, or receiving visits from, intending settlers in New Zealand, who were desirous of obtaining information regarding the resources, institutions, land and labour laws of the Dominion. This work, though outside the scope of my mission, was pleasing to me, and gave evidence of the widespread interest taken in New Zealand, and the advantage of having some accredited person available in remote parts of the United Kingdom to supply facts and advice to intending colonists.

Thanks to the official letter of introduction with which I was furnished, my work of inquiring into the extension of trade between New Zealand and the western ports of Great Britain was greatly facilitated by the ready assistance given to me by those upon whom I called. Of the courtesy and hospitality of the people of the United Kingdom it is impossible to speak in too high terms, and I desire to place upon record my thanks to all those who, in official or private capacity, did so much to render my labours light and agreeable.

As some of the gentlemen interviewed only gave free expression to their opinions on the understanding that their names should not be divulged in connection with their statements, I have deemed it advisable to preserve anonymity in the case of all non-official persons; but appended to the report will be found a list of the importers and merchants upon whom I called, which may be of use to producers and exporters in this country who desire to enter into direct relations with British importers and distributors.

Naturally, my inquiries were mainly directed to the question of how to increase the direct export to west-coast ports of our staple products—mutton, lamb, beef, rabbits, butter, and cheese—these being the articles for which a continually expanding market exists in the United Kingdom. In my report I therefore deal with these products under the headings of the different ports, and in relation to the population, harbour facilities, and means of distribution; while I treat of "Other Articles of Export" under a separate heading.

In the time at my disposal it was, of course, impossible to make exhaustive inquiries into all branches of our export trade; but what I have been able to learn will, I trust, prove suggestive, assist in the development of trade, and, where necessary, pave the way for further investigation.

II. BRISTOL.

THE PORT ACCOMMODATION.

The city and county of Bristol, with a population of nearly 400,000, is the first port of call for the west-coast steamers from New Zealand. This ancient city, with a history extending back for over a thousand years, has always been celebrated for its maritime enterprise. In olden times, when sailing-craft of moderate tonnage were the rule, vessels were loaded and discharged at various points on the banks of the River Avon, which flows through the heart of the city, and the channel of which was kept clear for navigation by the natural scour of tidal waters that rise and fall 48 ft. every twelve hours.

Developments to keep pace with modern requirements were started in 1809, when a new course for the river was formed, and the old waterway was converted into docks, with quays extending to two miles and a half on either side. Half a century later further harbour improvements were undertaken. The channel was deepened and better lighted, and a new entrance-lock was constructed, so that vessels 325 ft. in length between perpendiculars can now enter the docks, in the very heart of the city, with many factories and warehouses in close proximity to them.

The rapid growth in the size of ocean-going steamers soon rendered this provision inadequate, so, to keep pace with the times, new and extensive docks were constructed at Portishead and Avonmouth, both situated at the head of the estuary of the Severn, near the mouth of the Avon. The Avonmouth Dock, in which the New Zealand liners are berthed, has been found too small for the increasing requirements of the trade, and in 1902 the first sod of the Royal Edward Dock was cut by the Prince of Wales, and the work of construction, which is in the hands of Messrs. John