

taste. Danish bacon tops the market, and this position it has attained by the attention paid to breeding and by virtue of a patent system of curing. Under this method of curing, the bacon is placed in frames inside large boilers; the air is extracted and brine is let in; then air is admitted, and the bacon is perfectly cured in six hours—all the natural juices and the full flavour being retained, while the albumen in the meat is not made indigestible. When New Zealand starts exporting bacon she should copy Danish methods, though it remains to be demonstrated whether the system of cure will preserve the bacon during a long voyage.

Another wholesale dealer said that Danish butter had of late fallen relatively in price, which was probably due to New Zealand competition. He mentioned that last season's extra demand for cheese was largely due to the Chicago tinned-meat scare; but this will pass away.

The principal of a firm of produce-dealers said that last year there was an average loss of 10s. per hundredweight suffered by purchasers of New Zealand butter. Had the butter been consigned for sale the producers would have been so much the poorer. On the other hand, the price might have gone up, in which case sale on consignment would have given them better returns. His firm would much prefer to have butter on consignment, because then they would simply make their commission and run no risks. He did not blame the New Zealand producers—they did the best for themselves, just as he would do himself. New Zealand butter is of excellent quality and has an established reputation. He would like to see a regular steamboat service, making Liverpool the first port of call. At present his firm saves 1s. per hundredweight freight by getting butter landed at Liverpool; but, on the other hand, it runs the risk of losing 5s. to 10s. per hundredweight by missing the market. He was hopeful that the irregular running of the west-coast steamers would be corrected in time.

The representative of an influential firm of importers, after complaining of the irregular running of the west-coast steamers, went on to speak strongly against the New Zealand system of selling to the highest bidder the output of the dairy factories. It is, in his opinion, a short-sighted policy, and leads to unpleasantness; and the speculative element in it is detrimental to the extension of trade. The consignment system would be the best in the long-run for all concerned; a great deal depended, of course, upon the butter getting into good hands. The New Zealand factories should choose their English representatives, consign to them regularly for a series of years, and, if thought advisable, have some one in England to advise them whether to sell in advance, to hold, or to consign. During the first year of this system the prices might be lower in order to get possession of the market; but, when this was secured, prices would be altogether satisfactory. There should be mutual trust between New Zealand and England, and also a spirit of loyalty to each other. As an example of the want of these, he mentioned his firm's connection with a well-known Otago dairy factory. They started with this factory six years ago, giving 10½d. per pound for the butter. For years they advertised this brand and established its reputation in the English market. They had advised the factory as to the proper course to pursue, and by following that advice the producers got £5,000 more than they otherwise would have done. In spite of all this, when, last season, other buyers stepped in and offered a higher price, the factory transferred its business to them. It was not pleasant to be turned off in this way. In addition, this policy injures the brand, which has to start afresh and be advertised among a new set of retailers and consumers. Further, the purchasers in this particular case had lost money, and the butter had been "kicked about," all of which is detrimental to the growth of trade.

Another produce-importer spoke at some length of the losses caused by the irregular arrival of the west-coast steamers. He said it would be very easy to glut the Liverpool market with high-class goods, as the great bulk of the people want cheap meat and butter. It is a "penny-wise and pound-foolish" policy for New Zealand factories to throw over old purchasers of their product merely because others offered a better price. There is, he said, a great advantage to producers in having a fixed connection with a good distributing-house in England. The multiplicity of buyers of New Zealand butter is a good thing for the producers; but the multiplicity of sellers in England tends to run down the price.

The head of a firm of produce-importers expressed the opinion that the New Zealand factories should make more cheese. The Canadian cheese on the market now (May) had to be made last September; and the New Zealand article, coming on at a time when Canadian is high-priced, ought to sell well. New Zealand cheese is not quite to the taste of the people, but it brings within 2s. per hundredweight of the price of Canadian. He thought, however, that there would be a great sale for New Zealand cheese in Liverpool, if supplies were sent. He had lost on New Zealand butter last season. He is suing a New Zealand factory for £2,000 damages for having put boric acid in butter sold to him in excess of the legal limit.

A gentleman in the dairy-produce trade said that nothing stood in the way of a great development of imports from New Zealand except the irregular shipments. There were two steamers last season, each of which was a month behind time. One dealer lost 12s. per hundredweight on a shipment of butter by one of these steamers. There ought to be fortnightly steamers during the butter season. He could work up a large trade in the north of England if the shipments were regular. Even monthly steamers would be all right, if they could be depended upon. He thought a bad year or two—a period of low prices for butter, consequent upon the losses suffered last season—would convert New Zealand dairy-factory owners to the consignment principle. If New Zealand cheese were made softer in texture he could take a large quantity of it, and at a better price than could be got in London. In the Midlands and the north of England the people want cheese made on the Cheshire principle. As showing the extent of the market, he mentioned that it annually absorbs 5,000,000 cheeses made in the United Kingdom, and 3,000,000 imported from Canada and the United States. The New Zealand factories should follow the Canadian example—have duplicate plants for butter and cheese, and make the one or the other according to the demand. By