

nected with our export trade to London, as by providing better transit-sheds, &c. He could not, of course, speak for the Corporation; but he replied generally that they acted on the principle of leaving such things to be undertaken by private enterprise.

I paid two visits to Smithfield Market. While that great emporium of the meat trade impresses one by its extent and the generally excellent organization and appliances, the methods in vogue for distributing meat to retailers struck me as being very primitive and unsatisfactory. The meat is conveyed in small carts, owned by private carriers, and having a tarpaulin covering. Rows of these carts stand outside the market, sometimes for an hour or more, until each receives its load of different kinds of meat, which is carried out by hand. I watched these carts being loaded, and this is how it is done: Two or more sides of beef are placed in the bottom of the cart, a number of carcasses of frozen mutton or lamb are thrown in on top of them, then sides of bacon or hams are piled on top of the frozen meat, with small boxes of pressed meat, &c., jammed in at the sides. This crude and tedious process, carried on, as it must necessarily be, in wet or sultry weather, with the subsequent jolting of the meat during its transit through the streets to all parts of the city, must result in considerable bruising and general deterioration of the goods.

Among those I visited who are engaged in the importation and distribution of New Zealand meat and dairy-produce all over Britain was the manager of a large concern dealing extensively in meat. This gentleman said the west-coast steamers were a great convenience to them, enabling them to make direct shipments to Bristol, Liverpool, &c. The meat was thus landed at these ports in good condition, without the expense and deterioration consequent upon sending by rail from London. They had quantities of meat for Liverpool and Glasgow on the "Oswestry Grange." Owing to the length of the journey, the west-coast steamers were of very little use for the shipment of dairy-produce. The best means of increasing the trade in New Zealand foodstuffs was, in his opinion, for the producers to ship on consignment. Another large firm of general-produce importers on whom I called stated that they were desirous of making use of the west-coast steamers; but they considered the service was practically useless. It ought to be made as frequent and as rapid as that to London. Practically the same statement was made by the manager of another concern largely engaged in the importation of butter. The latter gentleman was loud in his complaints of the defective grading of butter, and hinted at "palm oil" to the graders being an element in the matter; but, on closer inquiry, I learned that he was chiefly referring to butter from Australia.

The principal of a firm of produce-dealers who have a branch in Liverpool stated that he would recommend New Zealand producers to cultivate the Port of Manchester as most suitable for the distribution of imported produce. He added, however, that little could be done in the way of extending trade in that direction until the west-coast steamer service was greatly improved.

The editor of the *Meat Trades Journal*, the organ of the retail butchers of England, said that the butchers were opposed to having special brands on meat—they preferred to sell it on its merits; and, because of this hostility, the branding of meat would not tend to increase the sale. He spoke highly of the quality of New Zealand mutton and lamb, but said its reputation suffered owing to its not being properly thawed before it is sold to the consumers. In his opinion the butchers should pay attention to this.

VIII.—OTHER ARTICLES OF EXPORT.

1. HEMP.

I was able to make some inquiries with regard to the consumption of New Zealand hemp, and found that purchasers are generally well satisfied with the quality and condition of that product and with the system of Government grading. There is every prospect of the trade increasing, and in view of this I think it most desirable that the exporters should get into more direct communication with the actual consumers of the article. Users of our hemp are very reticent in speaking of the purposes to which it is put, outside of the making of heavy ropes and the coarser kind of cordage; but as the result of indirect inquiries in Dundee and elsewhere I learned that the tow is used for mixing with other material in the making of the finer quality of bags, also in carpet-making, brush-manufacture, &c. Most of the buyers of New Zealand hemp and tow get their supplies through London brokers. To discover the ramifications of the hemp trade, and the best means of organizing it with a view to increasing its volume and obtaining the best price for the product, would require a good deal more time than I had at my disposal, but I have no doubt the information is obtainable and would prove highly beneficial to producers.

There are two large hemp and flax mills in Bristol, one of them using New Zealand tow for mixing purposes, while the other works the hemp for roping-yarns. There are a number of rope-makers in the southern counties of England, and also in the Midlands, who might become purchasers of New Zealand hemp if its merits were brought under their notice. Some of these, as well as manufacturers along the east coast of Great Britain, from Hull to Aberdeen, probably use our product without knowing it, as a good deal of mixing of hemp is done in London. In Belfast, where the largest ropeworks in the United Kingdom are situated, I could not learn that New Zealand hemp is used to any extent. In a recent trade article dealing with this subject it was stated that a sample of hemp grown in India had some time ago been exhibited in Belfast. Of New Zealand hemp, the writer of this article remarked that "presumably it is not suitable for Belfast manufacture, as no vigorous effort is made to bring it here, where an open market awaits it." There is not, in my opinion, sufficient warrant for the assumption that New Zealand hemp is unsuitable for Belfast manufacture, and it would be well if steps were taken to get hold of this very promising market. It could be efficiently supplied through the agency of the west-coast service, as there is regular steam communication with Belfast from Bristol, Liverpool, and Glasgow.