

The first fact that will be noted from this table is the large increase in imports from the River Plate. When it is remembered that the principal cause of the market depression last year could be traced to the large shipments coming from South America the fact is the more striking, and the wonder is that prices have been as good as events have proved.

Australia has maintained her supply of frozen beef, but the chilled shipments (Linley process) show a comparatively large decrease. As regards New Zealand, arrivals during the current year have not amounted to half those of 1910–11, and in view of market conditions here there is no doubt that shippers in the Dominion have acted wisely in restricting their supplies, for it is difficult to see how the market could have dealt with much heavier arrivals.

An interesting feature in connection with the chilled trade is that the shipment of sixty-two hinds and ten forequarters made from New Zealand to London at the end of March. These seventy-two quarters were treated by a special process, in which it is understood that Messrs. Nelson Brothers (Limited) were interested, and came per s.s. "Muritai," which arrived about the 5th May. They landed in good order, buyers being well pleased with the condition of the meat, which met a good market, and found a ready sale at about 3½d. for fores and 4½d. for hinds—i.e., from ¾d. to 1½d. per pound above frozen quotations. I understand, however, that the experiments will not be continued, as the process is thought to be too costly to allow of the treatment of shipments on a commercial scale.

Arrivals of frozen beef from Venezuela came to hand fairly frequently during the year, the total importations having increased by about 50 per cent. compared with those for 1910–11. The earlier consignments sold at about 3½d. per pound for hinds and 2½d. for fores, but even at these rates did not meet a brisk demand, the quality not being so satisfactory as could have been wished. Later shipments were disposed of as low as 3d. for hinds and 2½d. for fore-quarters, and despite slight improvement the meat has still been found to be too plain in quality for the market here. Uruguayan arrivals have decreased slightly, and here again, though the quality has often been indifferent, on the whole it is considered that an improvement has been made.

Importation of Frozen Meat to Continental Countries.

The past year has been a very busy one in connection with endeavours to secure the modification, if not the removal, of oppressive and restrictive regulations in various Continental countries, so as to permit of the importation of frozen meat. A good deal of correspondence has taken place between this Department and the Colonial Office, &c., as well as direct with British Ministers resident abroad, on the subject, and every phase of the matter has been kept in sight. Early in the year the Foreign Secretary specially circularized H.M. Representatives in various European and foreign countries, requesting that prompt information of any developments should be sent to him. This circular has proved of much service, and items of interest have been duly brought to your notice through the Colonial Office. As reports giving full information have been regularly forwarded to the Prime Minister, I need only mention here the principal events of the twelvemonth.

France.—At the beginning of the year the Secretary and President of the British Chamber of Commerce, Paris, called on you with the view to your taking some forward step in approaching the French authorities on the subject of the removal of the restrictive sanitary regulations. The opportunity was a most favourable one, in view of the enhanced cost of living in the Republic, and the French Minister of Agriculture was accordingly communicated with, and the various arguments and facts in support of our request were put before him. Later on in the year you went specially over to Paris and interviewed the Minister personally, when he advised that the matter be dealt with through the usual diplomatic channels. Accordingly, the Colonial Office was communicated with, and it was learned through H.M. Ambassador at Paris that a Customs Commission had been constituted to go into the whole matter of the measures to be adopted to combat the continued rise in the cost of living, and that therefore your representations would be considered with the general question. The report of the Commissioners was duly issued, and a full summarized translation was sent to New Zealand. The proposals of some of the French Councillors of State, having for their object the downward revision of the tariff, the removal of the vexatious sanitary regulations, &c., were examined, but rejected. From our standpoint, therefore, we are in precisely the same position as before—i.e., the importation of meat to France is still subject to the prohibitive regulations.

However, with the view to ascertaining if it were possible to import into France on a commercial scale carcasses of meat with the organs in a natural state of adhesion, you suggested that a trial shipment be made from the Dominion, and accordingly placed the matter before the Government. Inquiries have been made through the British Chamber of Commerce as to the likelihood of any French importer assisting to carry out the experiment, and a firm at Marseilles expressed themselves as willing to do so. Full details were therefore sent to Wellington, and it is hoped that the shipment will shortly be made.

During the year an actual demonstration of refrigerated meats as sent from the Dominion was made in the working refrigerator in the New Zealand Pavilion at the Roubaix Exhibition, referred to elsewhere. A special French edition of our two pamphlets on frozen meat was prepared, and some thousands of copies circulated both in connection with the Exhibition and later through the Paris Chamber of Commerce and M. Flipo to various working-men's clubs, &c. These will no doubt have a very good effect in keeping before certain sections of French consumers the advantages likely to be derived from the free importation of New Zealand meat.

Germany.—As far as the general position is concerned, there have been no developments at all during the year. It is known, however, that the cost of living is high, and meat prices are expected to rise again in 1912. It would seem, therefore, to be only a matter of time when the authorities will have to consider measures for meeting the requirements of the masses in the way of food-supplies. The Hamburg Chamber of Commerce in their yearly report refer to the matter, and recommend that the desired alterations in the tariff and importation laws be taken in hand.