

occupied some forty years ago, when its relation with gold was in a more or less fixed ratio. This was, of course, prior to demonetization by Germany in 1873.

MEAT.

Coming to the question of produce, since I arrived in England I have devoted special attention to the commercial and produce side of the work, having personally visited most of the harbours, docks, and stores, and witnessed the handling and the plant at the leading seaports of Great Britain. Time did not permit of my visiting Cardiff and Hull, but of those ports I have visited in connection with the handling of some of our leading products Bristol, Southampton, and Manchester occupy first place, and the Port of London last. I have taken steps to push on the facilities of the Port of London. For some considerable time operations were practically suspended owing to there being a division on the part of the meat people as to which of the docks were the most suitable. Some of the New Zealand farmers' representatives held that the South-west India Docks were the best because of their closer proximity to Smithfield, whilst the majority of those holding our meat here favoured the Albert Docks, lower down the river. I had an interview with Lord Devonport, Chairman of the Port of London Authority, and some members and officers of the Authority, and after a long discussion discovered that it was impossible to submit the terms to New Zealand they proposed in connection with the construction of the South-west India Docks, and the proposals, such as they were, would not have been taken in hand, even if agreed to, within five years. Such being the case, the question of the Albert Docks was gone into, and after much discussion, during which plans were inspected and suggestions made, Lord Devonport agreed, on behalf of the Port of London Authority, to call for tenders, and to accept one of the tenders received, and to have the work put in hand as early as possible. If this work be carried out there is no doubt that the facilities at the Port of London will be enormously improved, thereby benefiting not only the producers of New Zealand, but also the consumers at this end. The Port of London Authority hope to lessen the objection to the distance between the Albert Docks and Smithfield by utilizing the tramway service.

The proposal of the Port of London Authority is to erect sorting-sheds and stores at the north-west corner of the Albert Dock, and it is promised that those will be ready for use by December, 1914. The sheds are to have a quay frontage of 1,150 ft. by 120 ft. deep; the top story is to be insulated for the sorting of meat, and the store is to have a capacity of 250,000 carcasses; mechanical appliances are to be provided to remove the meat from the ship to the sorting-shed, from which, after sorting, it will be delivered, again mechanically, to cold store adjoining, or to craft, or to railway-van, as required.

This step is an absolute necessity, and is one which will lead to a marked improvement in the condition of our meat; it will prevent sorting in the hold, and also the deterioration at present due to delay, as it is assumed that all meat will go into the sorting-shed and that none will be redelivered until sufficient of any mark has accumulated to fill the barge or other conveyance. At present great delay occurs in filling the barges, and this is the chief cause of damage in connection with the barging. Attention will also be given as to the condition of the barges themselves.

Bristol.—The methods of handling meat at Avonmouth Docks during discharge are good. The ships discharge alongside the cold stores, the meat is lifted from the hold by sling, placed on an elevated platform, and carried into the cold store through an air-lock; it is stowed into the store according to mark, and redelivered to railway-vans (the only method of transit) as required. The exposure to the weather is very short, averaging from the hold to the store about half a minute. The only drawback is that discharge must cease in wet weather, but this the Dock Authority has promised to remedy by the use of covered mechanical carriers from the hold to the store. In fact, the facilities at Bristol, both for discharge and for distribution, are so good that if the London Dock Authorities did not greatly improve conditions at their port there would be a great likelihood of producers seriously considering the transference of their business, or as much of it as they can possibly transfer, from London to Bristol and other places where adequate accommodation is available.

Liverpool.—Few facilities are here provided for handling frozen meat. Slings are exclusively used; these land the meat into a large open shed, where it is loaded into the various conveyances for transit to the cold stores. The only advantages are that the meat is mostly under cover, and that the cold stores are not far away from the docks. Nevertheless, a considerable amount of damage occurs to our meat at this port, mostly due to lack of care on the part of receivers; owing to the shortage of carts, meat frequently remains far too long in the shed, naturally deteriorating the whole of the time. Here again a sorting-shed would be of use. I have already discussed the matter with the Mersey Dock and Harbour Board, and find that they would make the necessary improvements if assured of increased imports.

Glasgow.—The conditions here are much the same as at Liverpool, with the disadvantages that the stores are further away from the docks, and insulated vans for the carriage of meat are not in use.

Southampton.—The accommodation here is good in every respect

Importation of New Zealand Meat into Foreign Countries.

I have given attention to the above matter, but regret to say that indications of a payable trade are not present. Taking France as an example I found that, with duties and other expenses, if meat were worth 4½d. in London it would cost 8d. to 8½d. by the time it reached Paris, and this, together with the fact that we are handicapped by tariffs of almost 1d. per pound in competing against the Argentine, would preclude any possibility of a paying trade.