

A large amount of attention has been given to the hemp industry. Information concerning the bonus of £12,000 offered by the Government for improvements in flax-dressing machinery or methods of dealing with the by-products was widely distributed in proper channels throughout the country. As a result of the information given a leading specialist in fibre machinery has decided to go to New Zealand to test his patents on the spot.

DAIRY-PRODUCE.

The great importance of this subject requires me to make the following special references in this report, as the latter will no doubt be widely read by people interested in the Dominion.

Creamery Butter.

In the majority of brands the flavour may be said to have been satisfactory, but there seems to be a widening range in quality that even the pasteurizing of the cream for buttermaking does not seem to be able to prevent. This wide range in quality is attributable in a considerable degree to the growth of home separation in New Zealand and to the practice of sending to Home markets "whey" butter under the "Creamery" brand. This latter cause has, however, now been removed owing to the fact that "whey" butter is now sent forward classified as "Factory."

Just a word touching the position of creamery butters of secondary quality. Owing to the scientific methods introduced in the manufacture of margarine and the low prices at which it can be marketed, it is claimed that it will take the place of low-quality butters, which will then be practically unsaleable on Home markets. The public taste is becoming educated to using margarine in preference to inferior butters. To show how much that trade is growing here, one factory in the vicinity of London alone turns out 1,000 tons weekly.

Regarding butter generally, fishiness in the New Zealand creamery butters is decreasing. The body and make in our butters are generally giving satisfaction, but when the moisture-content of a butter is higher than 15 per cent. the body suffers and the make is inclined to be of a lardy or salvy appearance, breaking short and crumbly when the butter is of low temperature.

The constantly recurring instances of excessive moisture being found in our butters is a matter of grave import, and has a tendency to create a feeling of distrust in the minds of those who are in the habit of handling New Zealand creamery butters. A grocer in one of the provincial towns appeared on the charge of offering for sale butter that has been found to contain over 21 per cent. of moisture according to the City Analyst. This butter was New Zealand creamery butter. If producers of our creamery butters will persist in this policy it can only end in financial loss.

Attention is drawn to a considerable loss to the trade through the lack of distinctive and efficient branding of packages of unsalted butter, and it is also desired to draw the attention of producers to the necessity of supplying their agents or buyers with correct description for each shipment of creamery butter, so that confusion may be prevented at this end.

Cheese.

The flavour of the major portion of the cheese cargoes has been found to be more or less unclean. Some brands have been so bad indeed that sales have been repudiated for this reason, and in all cases when expert examination has been made there has been no alternative but to admit that the complaints were well sustained. So inferior, indeed, has been the general quality that it has been the cause of many buyers turning their attention to cheese derived from other sources.

Instructions not to repeat orders have been received by shipping firms in London from their clients very frequently during the last few months, and again, lines of cheese when sent out have to be returned to warehouse. So acute has this trouble become that retailers are willing to pay higher prices for cheese other than New Zealand in their endeavour not to lose trade. This condition must not be taken as applying to all makers, because there are brands of New Zealand cheese on the London market that have generally been satisfactory.

Whilst the inferior flavour in our cheese has given rise to very unfavourable criticism, comments upon the make of the cheese have been of even greater condemnatory character. Very loose and open make has been much in evidence, coupled very frequently with various types of gas or fermentation holes. So great has been the inferiority of make in some brands that it has been extremely difficult to do business at all. Allowances up to 1d. per pound have been asked for for this reason, and in isolated cases the cheese had to be disposed of at a very low price. In some instances the cheese could not be utilized for the class of trade for which it has been secured.

The glut of New Zealand cheese on the London market, which is estimated at 50,000 crates, is largely attributed to the inferior and secondary quality of a very considerable proportion of the cheese. This should not be so, as with the great prosperity here and lessened imports, stocks should really be cleared. The following figures are of interest as showing the position:—

Total quantity of "Cheddar" cheese imported into the United Kingdom during the last three years from British Dominions: Year ended 30th June, 1910, 102,519 tons; 1911, 97,330 tons; 1912, 97,775 tons.

Total quantity of cheese of various kinds imported into the United Kingdom for the last three years from all sources: 1910, 122,824 tons; 1911, 121,464 tons; 1912, 116,838 tons.

Yet, notwithstanding, New Zealand has on hand now 50,000 crates, as against 28,000 three years ago.