

while River Plate mutton, on the other hand, has been as steadily improving in quality. Of course, as yet, the quantity of best-quality River Plate mutton is small, but it must be only a question of a year or two until the proportion is largely increased. That this is true can be borne out by those gentlemen who have lately been in this country from New Zealand, and who then gave considerable attention and study to the condition of the frozen-meat trade here. Also, it has been shown to New Zealand producers by ocular demonstration with River Plate mutton lately sent from here to New Zealand that the quality of it compares favourably with that of New Zealand mutton. The position, therefore, is one worthy of earnest consideration, and without doubt it is imperative that steps be taken without loss of time to improve the present state of things.

I do not myself believe that it is necessary, were a little energy exerted on the part of the producers to uphold prices, that the low wholesale rates now ruling should have to be accepted. With proper care on the part of New Zealand breeders in studying the requirements of the Home market, it is acknowledged by all experts that the quality of New Zealand mutton would be unbeaten. Why, therefore, should not this desirable supremacy be attained?

At present the demand for New Zealand mutton, except in London and the South of England, is very small indeed. In all other parts of the country there is a large field for the distribution of New Zealand mutton. Of course, a certain quantity of it is now distributed there, but comparatively speaking the amount is infinitesimal, that field being almost entirely supplied with River Plate and Australian mutton, which is usually sold at low prices. It is this mutton that is heard of so often in New Zealand papers as being sold everywhere. I am often surprised when I read in these papers interviews with returned colonists, many of them men whom I should believe could not be imposed upon, stating that New Zealand mutton is sold everywhere throughout the country at prices, say, 4d., or 4½d. per pound for legs, &c. This is absurd. The mutton seen by these parties being offered for sale at low prices throughout the Midlands and North is certainly frozen mutton, and is called by the retailers "New Zealand" or "Canterbury," but it is not such. River Plate and Australian mutton, being landed at Liverpool, Manchester, and Glasgow, is retailed at the prices stated, and it is this meat that New Zealanders have seen when travelling throughout the country being sold as "New Zealand." Nor is it the finest quality of mutton from these countries that is retailed at these low prices.

The fact, however, remains that under existing circumstances New Zealand mutton will come more and more to the level of prices ruling for that from River Plate and Australia. Naturally it may be asked, what grounds are there for making this assertion? The reply is, because under existing circumstances there is no outlet for New Zealand mutton other than the channels through which River Plate and Australian mutton goes into consumption. These outlets are well satisfied with the quality of that mutton, and, as the price of it is lower than of New Zealand, preference is given to it. Now, New Zealand producers cannot afford to accept such a low price as their competitors can, and if they will only bestir themselves there is no necessity that they should. If, however, they allow things to go on as they are at present doing they certainly shortly will have to do so.

The present is, I consider, a good time to make an energetic move to open new fields for the distribution of New Zealand mutton, and to secure increased consumption of it, with the consequent improvement in prices. While River Plate and Australian mutton—especially the former—is pushed for sale throughout the country, it is chiefly the working-classes who are catered for. The higher-class trade has only to a very slight extent been cultivated. Except in a very few instances throughout the Midlands and north of the kingdom, butchers doing a high-class trade have not been induced to push the sale of New Zealand mutton at all. Several of the wholesale houses in the course of their business have sent travellers throughout the country endeavouring to push sales with these butchers. The result has been disappointing. They have been invariably met with the objection that there is no demand for the mutton amongst the butchers' customers, and that they did not care to stock it, as it might prove hurtful to the tone of their trade. In short, these high-class butchers do not want it introduced to their customers.

Now, it is a generally acknowledged truism that demand creates supply, but as regards New Zealand mutton we have got the supply without the demand. The New Zealand producers must therefore create this demand for themselves. It may be thought that this is more easily said than done, and it may be asked—How is this to be effected? I am satisfied, simply by advertising. Now, there are many ways of advertising—by advertisement in newspapers, by large posters, by circulars, or by lectures. For the present purpose, however, none of these means can be considered suitable. Supposing that advertisement by any of these means was adopted, and that this was instrumental in attracting notice to the mutton, which is doubtful, the difficulty at present would be that if the parties who became interested in it desired to obtain some of the mutton they might go to a shop where so-called "New Zealand" mutton was sold, and, asking for it, obtain what on trial would afford them dissatisfaction, and possibly more harm might be done to the reputation of New Zealand mutton than anticipated. The cost of such advertisement, if of any extent, would also amount to a very considerable sum of money each year, for which expenditure the return would be doubtful.

The form of advertisement which should be adopted is that by which the patronage of the better class of consumers would be attracted and insured. This would be accomplished by establishing in several of the large towns—say, having over a hundred thousand inhabitants—throughout the Midlands and the north, shops where the best class of New Zealand mutton could be exhibited and sold. Great attention would have to be given to opening these shops in a prominent position, handsomely fitting them up, and displaying the meat attractively. If this were done, care being taken to have only one shop in each town, from which centre all orders from outlying districts could be distributed, and a thorough system of notification of the opening of the shop by attractive circular to the better class of consumers in the surrounding