

Englishmen. Mr. Darbyshire, who is the largest owner there, will be passing through New Zealand within the next few months, buying stud sheep, and I think it would be well for some of you gentlemen to meet him. He will tell you that he can fatten sheep all the year round at his place.

43. Then, in order to equalise supplies of fat mutton, the freezing companies have not to hold for long periods of time the frozen carcasses?—They never hold, they ship as fast as the steamers come alongside to take them away.

44. That will be a disadvantage we shall always suffer from, because our fat mutton does not come into the works regularly?—I would advise New Zealand to use their utmost endeavours to push forward Mr. Chamberlain's scheme of preferential trade, because under that you can live; otherwise I do not know what you will do; wages will have to come down and hours of labour increased to enable you to compete. I am doing my utmost to help forward Mr. Chamberlain's scheme, and am advocating it in both my papers.

45. I suppose in the Argentine there are growers of mutton on a much larger scale, and they have not such a large number of small growers as in this country?—That is so.

46. And they can do by concerted action what we cannot hope to do here?—Yes.

47. The difficulty of getting large cargoes in one vessel, the difficulty of continuous and regular supplies to the London market, and the number of different people to whom the meat is consigned are factors which are apt to be very difficult to get over in this colony?—Yes. The works in the Argentine own the meat—the meat belongs to the three companies.

48. Under the conditions in the Argentine, does the grower of the mutton, as a grower, make any more out of his sheep than the grower does in New Zealand, under the conditions prevailing here?—I do not know if he makes any more, but he makes quite as much. I do not know what the grower makes here, so that it is rather hard for me to answer that question, but they are getting very high prices for their stock over there. Their cost of production is much less than yours. Mr. Learmonth told me he never made less than 12 per cent. on his capital over there.

49. How long have you been in the Argentine?—I have been there for several years. I was trading there for seven years, and I was a little over two months in the country three years ago.

50. When was your last visit?—Three years ago. I am on my way there now.

51. Have you kept yourself well up in the trade?—Yes, it was my interest to do so, as I run two papers.

52. Have you any knowledge as to whether there is deterioration of the meat if it is kept in stores anywhere?—Under the most favourable conditions I think you will find a slight deterioration the longer it is in ice. That is where the Argentine has the advantage of you. The passage across to England is only twenty-five days against your sixty days, and often more than that.

53. That element would be a serious drawback in connection with receiving-stores in this country?—It would be a drawback, but whether it would be worse than the present state of affairs it is for experts to say.

54. *Mr. Witheford.*] You said that the people in South Africa do not require the best meat?—Well, they have been used to such fearful meat for so many years that a very great improvement is found in the worst mutton we can send them from Australia or from here. I would like to mention that I went through the books of the C. C. and D. Co. while I was in London, and the day I was there I saw that in two days' orders they served seven hundred different towns in England. Mr. Montague Nelson showed me the books, and in over seven hundred towns in two days they sent out small consignments amounting to seven or eight thousand sheep and lambs. I forget the exact figures, but I remember there were over seven hundred towns. I have also met commercial travellers for meat-firms when I have been travelling in all parts of England.

55. *Sir W. R. Russell.*] Do you know personally anything about the carrying power of the alfalfa country?—I have been over a good deal of it.

56. What is the ordinary selling-price of that alfalfa land which carries ten sheep to the acre?—Land can be obtained on moderate terms from the Government at from 1s. to 1s. 10d. per 2·47 acres (not alfalfa land).

57. Rental?—No, freehold. The good cultivated land near the railway-stations is £2 15s., payable one-fourth down, and the remainder in four annual instalments, with 10 per cent. interest added.

58. If it carries ten sheep to the acre, and they get 8 lb. of wool per sheep, and 6d. a pound for wool, they get £2 for the wool alone off that land?—The value of that land is £7 to £8 an acre—the alfalfa land. I was reading from the Government Land Board's figures. You can buy land at anything from 8s. an acre up to £3 or £4 an acre, and you can also pay £7 to £8 for rich dairy land.

59. But taking this alfalfa land worth £7 an acre: does that not seem to rather contradict the figures if you get £1 4s. for the wool alone. I am assuming that they get 8 lb. of wool from a sheep at 6d. a pound?—You cannot reckon more than 4d. a pound for the cross-bred wool in the grease now.

60. Have they not been getting that in past years?—I think it was only 4d. or 4½d. last year. Mr. Learmonth tells me now that he is making 18 per cent. on his property, and when he gets the rest of his land under alfalfa he expects to make 23 per cent.

61. You quoted two stations, one of which had 800,000 acres on portion of which there were 158,000 sheep, and so many cattle and horses. That does not represent anything like ten sheep to the acre?—No; but that was not alfalfa country. Three-fourths of it was *Pasta Dura*, and most of it was uncultivated.