

165. And have they been increasing or reducing the number of these shops?—Increasing them enormously, as will be seen from a paragraph in the *Pastoralists' Review* of the 16th June last: "There seems an increasing tendency on the part of Plate houses to open shops. During a visit to the Midlands I saw shops at Birmingham run by the Fresh Meat Company, who also have shops at Manchester, Liverpool, Leicester, &c. The meat of this company is largely sold in the establishments of Eastmans (Limited). Sansinenas also have a few shops, but not in their own name—probably about a score, representing business taken over. Messrs. James Nelson and Sons' shops in the London neighbourhood increase."

166. *Mr. Laurenson.*] I have read this scheme over, Mr. Cameron, and it appears on the face of it to be a very good one, but there is one point that strikes me, and that is the great danger of leakage through the class of men who would be in charge of these shops. Would there not be a danger of pilfering? Have you referred to that?—Yes; I have provided means to avoid that, and which were adopted in my own shops at Home.

167. It is admitted that a good price is paid at present to the farmer for his produce: is it your opinion that if this scheme were put into effect the result would be that a better price would be obtained than is given even now?—I do not go the length of saying there would be a better price given, but it would have the effect of maintaining the present good price.

168. There is an elaborate scheme which has been prepared by a man named Joyce: have you heard of that?—I have seen it.

169. What do you think of it?—It is hardly fair to ask me that. I do not think it is so good as my own.

170. The scheme practically relieves us of any danger from pilfering, and also of a great deal of risk?—I understand it requires an agreement to be come to between the River Plate people and ourselves.

171. *Mr. Rutherford.*] It is generally understood that there would be very great difficulty in getting the freezing and shipping companies to combine. How would it strike you if the Government were to establish freezing-works and send the meat away in regular shipments themselves?—I am not in favour of the Government becoming traders in that manner. My proposal is merely to advertise our meat.

172. *The Chairman.*] Although the prices are higher now than they were two years ago, the supplies have enormously increased also. The supplies for the first six months of this year were over a million and a half of sheep, as against 880,000 sheep for the first half of 1901; and the record month of imports of sheep into England from New Zealand during the first six months of this year was made in June of 336,000 sheep. When you come to sheep and lambs for the half-year ending June, it was within a few carcasses of three millions. The lamb had doubled in the first six months of this year over what it was in 1901, and there were as many sheep imported into England from New Zealand in three months of this year as in the six months of 1901. Does it not seem to you, in face of this enormously increased supply, that the market at Home is doing remarkably well?—I say so.

173. Do you think that if a fall in prices were to take place the fact of having eight or ten shops opened would have the slightest effect in checking it?—I do. I think that each shop opened in a district would tend to create a special demand.

174. How many sheep and lambs do you anticipate selling in a year in each of these shops?—That is problematical. I have put it down at a very small number in the estimate.

175. Could you give us an estimate?—2,080 carcasses of mutton and 3,640 carcasses of lamb. It would be double that in three years.

176. Do you think it would have any effect at all if four thousand odd sheep and lamb were sold the first year, when you see that in six months they have taken three millions?—I say it would help to create a special market.

177. The question is, would it have any influence?—Certainly, in creating a special market.

178. On the question of honesty I referred you to Rose and Co.?—Yes.

179. They have five shops. Have they not nearly worried their lives out in trying to keep people honest? The proprietors, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander, take most active part, and have watched their shops night and day—the shops are all within a quarter of a mile of each other—and yet the worry they suffered nearly put them in their graves?—I do not think so.

180. If they have told me that the annoyance and worry of looking after their men has nearly broken them down would you say that was incorrect?—No, I would not. They certainly looked very hale and hearty when I saw them a few months ago however.

181. I am merely putting to you what is within my own experience. If it is impossible for them with their constant vigilance to prevent leakage, how is it possible to get honesty in a number of shops in different parts of Great Britain?—I think you are wrong. What you say implies that you cannot get any honest butchers in Great Britain.

182. Do you know why Eastmans have many so small indifferent shops in one district?—To get the trade.

183. Do you know why they do not have one big shop instead of a number of small ones?—Because they do business with a small class of people.

184. Is it not a fact that they have several of these shops in one street not far apart?—Yes.

185. Would you not think, if it were possible, they would have one big shop instead of a number of small ones?—No; it is not their policy.

186. Is it not a fact that the reason is that one shop is a check on the other's takings?—I cannot say. It is a fact they have open tills in most of the shops that the shopmen can get at.

187. In your plan the shopman handles all the cash?—No; the purchaser hands it to the cashier.