

perature of about 120 degrees. By this means a large proportion of the fat in the wool passes away with the warm water into the save-alls, where it is afterwards collected. After removing the wool from the extractor it was then again dollied with water at 120 degrees to which a small quantity of sulphuric acid was added in the proportion of about 12 lb. to each 180 lb. of dry wool. The effect of the sulphuric acid was to act as a solvent for what fat might be left. After being dollied for generally about half an hour the wool was placed on the open wire tables in the open air, and it was there dried from one day to several days, according to general weather and atmospheric conditions. Whilst on these tables it was also handled and turned in order to facilitate drying. From these tables the wool when dried was removed to the wool store, where the practice is to allow it lie until sufficient accumulates to warrant baling. No record of actual dates has been kept, but the invariable practice that has been followed is that no wool of this description is sent from the works store for shipment until some considerable time after baling, generally about four weeks at least.

With regard to the s.s. "Gothic" wool, no bale bearing the brand No. 149 was shipped in this vessel, but two bales of XXX wool, cross-bred pelt washings, bearing the marks Nos. 749 and 750 were on board this vessel, together with another bale of the same quality marked No. 770. These bales are, we think, the bales referred to on the list supplied with your letter. These wools are of the same class, and have been treated according to the same process as above fully described in connection with the "Rimutaka" shipment. These bales were despatched from the works on the 9th April, and appear to have been shipped on the 11th April.

In the s.s. "Waimate," eight bales of the same class of wool, "cross-bred pelt washings," left the works as follows: On the 2nd April, bale No. 511; on the 4th April, bales Nos. 720 and 721; on the 5th April, bales Nos. 554, 649, 650, 651, and 652. We can add nothing further in connection with the treatment of these than has been above detailed.

We regret that we cannot supply the information exactly in the form required in your letter, but the above embodies all that we can ascertain with regard to these shipments. Should you desire any further information which we can possibly secure we shall be pleased to try and furnish same.

Yours, &c.,

For the Christchurch Meat Company (Limited),
W. MURRAY, Manager.

The Chairman, Wool-fires Royal Commission, Wellington.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 21st January, 1907.

We expected to have seen you on Saturday, as arranged, but understand that on account of the steamer's delay your arrival in Christchurch was so late that it was impossible to do anything on Saturday.

Since writing you on the 17th instant fully with all the information then in our possession relating to the shipments enumerated in your query of the 6th December, we have had an experience at our Islington works which we think is of the utmost importance. Late in the afternoon of the 17th instant, after our letter had been written, we received telephone advice from Islington that the foreman of the wool department had just detected a smell of fire amongst some of the wool received into his store *ex* our special wool recovery department, which treats with the wool saved from the process of pelt manufacture. This is the wool which has been shipped under the brand XXX, designated "cross-bred pelt washings."

As reported to the Secretary of your Commission to-day, when certain suspicion was thrown last year upon wool of this quality, the writer issued instructions that no more wool of this description should on any account be shipped until we were in a position to judge clearly as to whether there was particular danger of spontaneous combustion from this class of wool. Since about July of last year, therefore, no shipments of this class have been made.

The wool in which the spontaneous combustion took place was lying loose in the wool store at Islington, and had not been subject to any particular pressure. It has been reported to me that the rays from the sun at a certain time of the day struck upon this heap through a roof window, and it was suggested that possibly this might have accounted for the ignition. We may say, however, that from the evidence before us, which points clearly to the fact that ignition took place within the heap and not on the outside, that it would appear as if spontaneous combustion alone had been responsible.

We attach hereto copy of our chemist's report upon the incipient fire, from which you will notice that the amount of actual moisture in this wool appears to be abnormally low. On the other hand, the amount of foreign fat, as already reported, is very high.

We have handed to your Secretary two samples of the wool—one as ready for shipment, and the other after the spontaneous combustion took place on the afternoon of the 17th instant. The latter sample is wet, on account of the wool having been thrown out and having been subject to heavy rain during the night.

Should the Commission desire to conduct a special experiment with this class of wool, we shall be very pleased to forward a bale or more, as may be desired, at any time on receipt of advice. We have explained to your Secretary that it is only within the last season or two that any attempt has been made to save and ship this particular class of wool, and there is therefore practically only the experience of the shipments of the latter end of 1905 and the season 1906 to guide us in forming conclusions as to its safety or otherwise.

We feel it our duty to inform you fully as to this, as it undoubtedly may help the Commission to arrive at a sound conclusion as to on what class of wools there are dangerous possibilities of spontaneous combustion.

Whilst it is obviously our duty to assist the Commission in every way in its labours, we trust that you will see that no undue publicity is given to the information which we now forward you. We have felt it our duty to place these facts very fully before you, and all that we desire is that