

butter-blending machines in use which show automatically the proportion of moisture in the butter. It would, in his opinion, be well to have butter treated by these machines, and described and passed as "blended butter," because "milled butter" from New Zealand has a bad reputation. "Renovated butter," which is butter melted and aerated, is very good, and commands a good price. He considered butter-blending a perfectly honest practice, and it is the means of keeping up the price of New Zealand butter. It would be very foolish of the New Zealand Government to pass a law to prevent the exportation of saltless butter. Still, he believed that a good deal of blending could very well be done in New Zealand, if the dairy factories would blend it properly and export it as "blended butter." Butter without preservatives does not keep well. His firm sold some to Holland dealers at 109s. per hundredweight, bought it back at 97s., resold it in England at 92s., and now it was being thrown back on their hands because of its non-keeping qualities. Butter with preservatives in it is not allowed to be landed in Germany or Holland. It would, in this gentleman's opinion, be a huge mistake for New Zealand factories to stop butter-making and devote themselves solely to cheesemaking. Canada has to a great extent stopped buttermaking (producing little more than sufficient for her own consumption), and is largely increasing her output of cheese. Furthermore, the rate of freights—the difference between those from Canada and those from New Zealand—makes it inadvisable for New Zealand dairymen to go in more extensively for cheesemaking. The freight from Canada is 1s. 1d. for butter and 1s. 3d. for cheese, against 2s. 2d. for butter and 3s. 6d. to 4s. 8d. for cheese from New Zealand. Another reason why New Zealand should adhere to buttermaking is that New Zealand butter fetches a higher price than Canadian in England, whereas New Zealand cheese commands a lower price than Canadian.

Other dairy-produce importers with whom I conversed had no suggestions to make. They either deal exclusively in Irish and Canadian, or get their New Zealand butter and cheese through London. One of them expressed the opinion that New Zealand producers would not get so good a price for their butter in the coming season. He believed that consignment for sale would prove the best system in the long-run. Another gentleman said he was prepared to do business in New Zealand bacon if producers would export it.

*Frozen Meat.*—The principal of a firm that does the bulk of the foreign meat trade in Cardiff said that New Zealand meat is growing in popularity every year, and the trade in it would more rapidly increase if the steamers in the west-coast service were to call at Cardiff. His firm purchases the greater part of the New Zealand meat that is landed at Avonmouth. Barry would in one respect be cheaper, as the charges there are by the ton, whereas at Avonmouth they are per carcass. If the steamers were to call at Barry, where they could get bunker-coal, it would suit his firm much better than the present arrangement of calling at Avonmouth. At the same time, they preferred Avonmouth to London. Cardiff, he said, is the third largest port in the United Kingdom for the importation of frozen meat—Argentine, Australian, and New Zealand. The Argentine steamers come into Cardiff, and the meat is landed in good condition. New Zealand meat, on the other hand, is subject to deterioration through handling, and if consigned to Avonmouth has rail charges added to the cost.

*The West-coast Service.*—The only drawback to the steamer service from New Zealand, a large importer of produce said, is its irregularity. The seven weeks' passage is no obstacle; for, owing to the many delays in London, butter can be delivered in Cardiff almost as quickly by the west-coast service as *via* London. He considered that a vast amount of good had been done to New Zealand producers by the running of the Federal-Houlder-Shire steamers. He was quite satisfied, even though the steamers did not call at Cardiff; but of course he would be better pleased if they did. If they were to call at Barry for bunker-coal they could there discharge cheese, butter, and meat for Cardiff. He believed that in the course of a few years the west-coast trade will have developed equally with that of London, for the service is improving, despite the continued irregularities. In a few years, he thought, the west-coast trade would be able to employ fortnightly steamers. His firm finds that the west-coast service suits much better than any other. He blamed the narrowness and lack of patriotism of the Marquis of Bute's agent. Had a better spirit been shown, Cardiff would have had double its present population by now. Shipbuilders were prepared to come here and erect large yards; but such stringent conditions were imposed by the dock authorities that they went to Swansea instead. Similarly, some years ago, the coal people asked Lord Bute to provide more dock accommodation; but the reply of his agent was in effect, "Build your own docks." The result was that the Barry docks were built, and so much business was lost to Cardiff. If one of the other steamboat companies could be subsidised to send steamers alternately to London and Cardiff, it would be a great boon to the west coast. If Bristol were thought the better port, let the steamers go there instead of to Cardiff.

Another importer said he would like to see a proviso made compelling the west-coast steamers to call at Cardiff. Perhaps the Bute Dock authorities might be induced to reduce charges, in order to encourage steamers to call.

In the course of conversation with the manager of the Bute Docks I mentioned the desire of Cardiff merchants that the west-coast steamers should call at that port, and I asked whether in such event there was any hope of a reduction in charges. The reply was curt and conclusive, "No; we run the docks on business lines, and not from philanthropic motives." He further informed me that cold-stores were provided by the dock authorities, but were practically never used. They would probably be taken over by the Cardiff firm of meat-importers upon whom I called.

The explanation of the offhand attitude of the Bute Docks management was provided by a gentleman whom I saw later. Cardiff, he said, depends principally upon her large export of coal, and the authorities do not trouble about the import trade.