

COMMERCIAL.

MR. HENRY DRIVER (on behalf of the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company) reports for the week ending April 4, as follows:—

Fat Cattle.—Only 125 head were yarded, which were chiefly of good to prime quality, and in consequence a slight improvement in prices may be reported. Best pens of bullocks brought from £9 10s to £12 10s; do cows, £7 to £10 10s—or equal to 30s per 100lbs. for prime quality. At the yards we sold 30, and placed 40 head privately.

Fat Calves.—Ten were penned, and readily sold at from 20s to 55s, according to quality.

Fat Sheep.—2500 came forward, and this rather large number, together with the fact that the trade was plentifully supplied, caused sales to be extremely difficult to effect at satisfactory prices, and half the number had to be held over. Best pens of cross-breeds brought from 7s 9d to 10s 6d; merinos, from 5s to 7s 9d—or 1½ per lb. for prime quality.

Fat Lambs.—200 were penned, and all found buyers at late rates—say 5s 6d to 8s.

Store Cattle.—There is a fair demand for mixed lots, or for good-conditioned quiet cattle for winter feeding. There are no large transactions to report.

Store Sheep.—The demand for young merinos previously reported still continues, and during the week we have sold of various descriptions 6500 at quotations—say, merino wethers, two, four, and six-tooth, 5s 6d; do, full-mouthed, 3s; merino ewes, two, four, and six-tooth, 6s 6d to 7s; do, full-mouthed, 2s 6d to 3s 6d; cross-breeds, four-tooth and over, 7s to 7s 6d; do, two-tooth, 6s to 6s 6d.

Wool.—London wool sales closed on the 28th ult. Great reduction in price of medium and inferior. Choice fleece and lambs' were scarce, and brought good prices. As we have remarked some weeks ago, the reduced price was principally caused by the faulty condition of the Australian clip, which preponderated at these sales. In this market there is a good demand for combing fleece at a slight reduction on late rates. There is very little coming forward, the bulk of the clip being shipped.

Sheepskins.—At our weekly auction sale yesterday, we had a full catalogue, which was well attended by buyers, who competed freely at full rates: Full wool cross-breeds, 5s 4d; merino, 4s 8d; butchers' green, inferior, 2s 2d; cross-breeds, 2s 7d; lambs', 1s 6d to 2s 4d; pelts, 9d to 1s 1d.

Hides were in good demand, every lot selling at improved rates, viz: In light and inferior, 6s to 11s 9d; medium, 14s 9d to 16s 6d; green slaughters, 21s 6d.

Tallow.—There was good demand for all offered—rough, from 20s 6d; medium, 27s 6d to 28s 6d.

Grain.—At our grain stores yesterday afternoon we submitted 2000 bags to auction. Wheat brought 4s 1d to 5s, the latter price being offered for 7000 bushels prime Southland wheat. Inferior and damaged barley sold at 2s 3d to 2s 6d; medium do, 3s to 3s 6d. Oats, feed, 2s 3d per bushel. The market is fully supplied with wheat. Oats are only in moderate supply, with a good shipping demand at 2s 3d to 2s 4d for good to heavy feed samples. Barley: Prime malting is scarce, and worth 4s 6d to 4s 9d; second class, 3s 6d to 4s; inferior, 2s 3d to 3s. Supply principally inferior, which is very unsaleable.

MR. SKENE reports for the week ending April 4, 1877:—Working people have now fairly settled down to work for the winter, and it is high time, for the holidays, &c., have seriously hindered work for a good part of March. Orders are coming in fast for ploughmen and all sorts suited for farm. But there are far too many totally unsuited for such hanging about. Neither farmers nor men need dread an overstock of skilled ploughmen during the present generation. The building trade and carpenters are well employed. There is very little life to report in the iron trade. Shepherds are out of season. Female servants for private houses and hotels are in brisk demand. Couples are too plentiful, those without families have the best chance; but if settlers persist in preferring such, where is our supply of ploughmen and shepherds to come from? Wages—Couples, £65, £70, and £80; shepherds, £60; day labor, 7s, 8s, and 9s; dairy hands, 20s and 15s; cooks, grooms, waiters, barmen, &c., 20s, 25s, and up to 50s per week; hotel girls, 12s, 15s, and 20s; house girls, 10s, 12s, and 15s; storemen and clerks, 30s to 60s; boys and girls, 5s, 6s, and 10s; carpenters, 10s to 13s; bushmen, 8s and 9s.

MR. A. MERCER reports as follows for the week ending April 4, 1877, retail prices only:—Fresh butter, in ½ and 1lb prints, 1s 4d to 1s 6d; fresh butter, in lumps, 1s 2d to 1s 3d; powdered and salt butter, 1s 3d. Fresh butter for this season of the year is very plentiful, and the most of the shops in town have to salt down their supplies. Cheese, best quality, 10d to 1s; English, unsaleable, 1s 4d per lb; side and rolled bacon, 10d to 11d; Colonial hams, 1s 1d to 1s 2d per lb; English hams, 1s 4d to 1s 6d; eggs very scarce, retailing at 2s 3d per dozen.

MR. M. C. FLEMING reports (wholesale prices) for the week ending April 4, 1877, as follows:—Oats (feed), per bushel, 2s to 2s 3d; milling, 2s 6d. Wheat (chicks), 3s to 3s 6d. Barley, malting, 4s to 4s 6d; feed, 2s 6d to 3s. Pollard, scarce. Bran, £3 15s, bags included. Flour, large bags, £13; small, £13 10s. Oatmeal, £12 10s. Potatoes, new, 4s per cwt. Hay, new, £3 15s; old hay, £4 per ton. Chaff, £4 per ton. Straw, £2 per ton.

MR. J. VEZEX reports for the week ending April 4, 1877, retail:—Roast beef, 6d to 8d per lb; boiling do., 4d to 5d per lb; stewing do., 4d to 6d per lb; steak, 6d to 9d per lb; mutton, 3d to 6d per lb; veal, 4d to 8d per lb; pork, 6d to 8d per lb; lamb, 2s to 3s 6d per quarter.

A VISIT TO THE CALEDONIAN SPORTS.

EASTER Monday breaking fine, I took up the paper to ascertain what Dunedin had provided for its inhabitants in the way of amusement. Steamboat excursions and the Caledonian sports constituted the bill of fare. I was too late for the steamers, they having started at the early hour of 9 and 10 a.m., so I resolved on wending my way to Kensington and regaling myself on Scotch reels, Cumberland wrestling, foot racing, and bagpipes. The morning was beautiful, and the walk to the ground would have been most enjoyable if the tide had been in, but the unpleasant odours which arise when the tide is out, completely did away with the pleasure derived from the bright sun, the pure air, and the charming scenery which surrounds this fair town. The ground where the sports were held, if it were better drained, is well adapted for its purpose, and the stand, after those at Flemington and the Melbourne cricket ground, will compare favorably with anything else of the kind in Australia. It is a large and substantial structure.

I have seen a good deal of foot-racing in my time, and was not much struck with the exhibition of Monday last. With the exception of Macpherson's running, it was only mediocre. Macpherson with practice ought to develop into a very fleet runner. Why were there no long races in the programme? They test the stamina of the competitors, and they afford more amusement to the public. To win a long race a man must train strictly, no half measures will suffice. I have often witnessed the spectacle in foot-races of bottle-holders running occasionally alongside a competitor, and dousing him with cold water. Until last Monday I was always under the idea that this was a means used for freshening the runner up; but on that occasion there was one enthusiastic youth who was very excited over one of the competitors in the walking match. He was most assiduous in his attentions with the bottle; his method of application was, however, rather novel. Instead of throwing the water directly on his friend's head and face from the bottle, he, in the first place, inserted the bottle into his own mouth, took a good mouthful from it, then, when he saw his friend approaching, he would plant himself close to the ring and dexterously lodge the contents in his friend's face. If this was intended as a refresher, I, for my part, should certainly have selected some other means of application. I may add that this competitor did not win.

The wrestling took my fancy most, and the bagpipes least. Every one to his taste, say I; but I must confess I cannot for the life of me see where the music comes in in the bagpipes. Two ardent votaries of this wonderfully-made instrument continued perambulating the ground the entire afternoon, blowing away to their heart's content, and, I presume, to the delight of most of the Scotchmen present. Two members of the fair sex, however, who were standing within hearing of me, expressed their disapprobation of the national instrument in strong terms, and with accents which evidently proclaimed them as hailing from north of the Tweed. One remarked that it reminded her of the "childer squalin' in the mornin';" and the other expressed a fear that the "puir bodies maun be tired," and wished that some one would "tak them away and gie them a drap of beer."

Of the wrestlers, a little man with yellow socks pleased me most. He was a small, slight fellow, but evidently as hard as nails. He displayed great science and agility, and the way he threw his opponents, who were all larger men than himself, gave great amusement to the people. I did not wait to see who eventually won the first prize for wrestling, but it seemed to me that the light weights had not fair play in the arrangement of the prizes. The best of the light weights could only hope for second prize. It was not to be expected that little yellow feet, for instance, would succeed in throwing a giant like Tyson, yet it was only by the accomplishment of such a miracle that he could claim the first prizes.

The bellman of Dunedin is ubiquitous. His bell is to be met with everywhere. He was the first person I noticed on the ground on Monday. His general get-up, not forgetting his voice, is imposing. His duties on this occasion were, amongst others, to give notice of the different events, and summon competitors to their posts. On one occasion the gentleman who had to furnish the music for a dance did not put in an appearance at the first summons of the bell. The bell had to be rung several times before he turned up, and the way Mr. Bellman rang that bell, and demanded in stentorian tones that "the gentleman who was to play the fiddle for the hornpipe would please now step into the arena," was a treat to all beholders. "The gentleman who was to play the fiddle" had been regaling the inner man, or, at least, so thought the bellman, and it evidently banished all malice he might entertain for the trouble he had been put to in calling him, because he met him with an easy smile and said, "Ah, Mr. Fiddler, we have been calling you, but I perceive you have been having a drink." Mr. Fiddler smiled a guilty smile and assumed his post.

Besides the legitimate amusements there was an Aunt Sally, presided over by a very voluble dandy. This Sambo professed a devoted attachment to his Sally; and one way he had of showing it was by breaking out into loud manifestations of concern for his "dear partner" whenever any of the public, who patronised him, commenced shieing at the pipe in the aforesaid Sally's mouth. The result was that the pipe escaped scatheless, for the loud utterings of the dark proprietor helped considerably to distract the attention and divert the aim of the person attempting to strike it. He was not a witty personage, and his remarks were all noise and fury, signifying nothing. Himself and his Sally, however, reaped a good harvest, for though several knocked the pipe out of Sally's mouth, none succeeded in breaking its bowl. There were other amusements of a somewhat similar kind, the ring business—*et hoc genus omne*; but I don't fancy that any of their spirited proprietors made their fortunes. The sports, as a whole, passed off well, and afforded considerable amusement to the large crowd which patronised them.

K.Y.Z.