

Messrs. MILES BROTHERS and Co. to the AGENT-GENERAL.

DEAR SIR,—

79, Gracechurch Street, London, E.C., 20th June, 1888.

Your favour of the 13th instant duly reached us, and we have now much pleasure in giving you the following information respecting New Zealand dairy produce:—

*Butter.*—We received a consignment of butter from New Zealand when the cool-chambers in the steamers were first fitted on board; but the shipment arrived out of condition, and our friends were rather discouraged from making another trial, as they stated that butter of a quality fit for shipment was difficult to obtain. As, however, a very large quantity found its way to the market in good condition last season, we conclude that dairy-farmers on the other side have mastered some of the difficulties of good butter-making, and are able to turn out a much better article. We wrote to our house at Christchurch some months ago, and advised them to ship when the season opened. We understand that butter is received from Auckland packed in specially-prepared cases, enamelled inside, which are costly, and are supposed to be returned to the colony; but this is impossible, as the cases are sold with the butter, and it would be most difficult to collect the packages when empty. Our broker states that this patent case is no advantage, as butter comes quite as well in kegs if properly packed. The weight should be from 60lb. to 75lb. net (the 60lb. net preferred), and the kegs should not be filled, but half an inch left all round between the butter and the keg. The cask should then be headed up, and a hole made through which pickle (strong brine) should be poured in until full, when a bung (wood) should be inserted to prevent the liquor running out. The butter should be made as little salt as possible consistent with its keeping sound. Unless butter is perfectly sweet and good to eat it should not be sent Home, for if it has gone off at all or is in the least tainted it brings a miserable price, as it is used for cooking-purposes, and our market is flooded with such kinds. Directly the butter is made it should be packed and sent off to the refrigerator, and it would then in all probability arrive here in good saleable order. Shipments from New Zealand begin to arrive in November, and continue up to, say, early in April, for we do not get any parcels during the summer months. The trade is growing very fast, and we hope to make £6 per hundredweight next season for really good quality New Zealand butter. The kegs should have galvanised-iron hoops, as they do not rust.

*Cheese.*—By the s.s. "Aorangi," in December, 1887, we received a consignment of thirteen cases loaf-cheese and eleven cases large cheese; by the s.s. "Kaikoura," which arrived on the 22nd February, 1888, twenty cases; and by the s.s. "Rimutaka," which arrived 19th May, 1888, fifteen cases. The first shipment was not of fine quality, but happened to arrive when loaf-cheese was scarce, and we were fortunate in obtaining £2 8s. for the loaves; but they were so hard that the buyers could not dispose of them, and they were resold for considerably less money. The large cheese made £1 16s. The second shipment consisted principally of loaf-cheese, which is not much liked here, as it is too wasteful, having so much rind. The quality was poor, with a total absence of richness, and we obtained £1 19s. and £2 for the loaves. The four cases of large cheese were also of poor quality and very crumbly, and made £2 3s. The parcel per "Rimutaka" was not of one quality, some of the cheese being good and some indifferent; eight cases we sold in London at £2 6s., and seven cases in Bristol at £2. The larger the cheese the better it is liked here—say, from 60lb. to 65lb. each. New cheese is preferred to old. New cheese, if made in the hot weather, should be placed in the steamer's refrigerator, say, within ten days after it has been made; but the best time to make it would be in the cool of the New Zealand autumn—say, March. We hear, however, that there is an objection in the colony to sending Home new cheese, as it cannot be turned in the cool-chamber on board; but we think it might be sent as new as possible. New Zealand cheese has been selling in the shops in London at 6½d. to 7½d., according to quality. The wholesale price is ruled principally by America, which is usually of better quality than New Zealand. We believe that London is the best market for both butter and cheese.

*Condensed and Powdered Milk.*—We have not seen any of these, neither have we heard of any shipments to this country from New Zealand.

*Shipping Rates.*—The freight is 1d. per pound in cold-chamber for both butter and cheese from New Zealand.

We are, &c.,

MILES BROTHERS AND Co.

The Agent-General for New Zealand, 7, Westminster Chambers, S.W.

Mr. H. M. PAUL to the AGENT-GENERAL.

New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Company (Limited),  
London, 14th June, 1888.

DEAR SIR,—

In reply to your letter of yesterday, we have much pleasure in giving the following information upon the several inquiries made respecting New Zealand butter and cheese, &c., viz. :—

1. (a.) *Butter and Cheese.*—Shipments handled by this company here during the season 1887–88 amounted to 9,150 packages of the former and 5,200 cases of the latter. The season covers the period from October to May. (b.) Butter was packed mostly in kegs containing about 60lb. each, generally well made, of white hard-woods with galvanised-iron hoops; but a large quantity came in Pond's patent boxes, containing about 50lb. each, a very nice form of package, but only suitable for the primest qualities. The other packages availed of were large kegs (containing about 100lb. each), plain wooden boxes, old beer-casks, tins (round and square), tin-lined cases, and occasionally baskets. Cheese was packed almost entirely in hexagonal or octagonal open wooden cases, containing from two to eight cheeses, according to size. Some came in tins, and some in closed boxes or cases; but the total so received was quite unimportant. (c.) Prices have ranged, according to quality and time of sale, between £1 8s. and £5 12s. per hundredweight for butter (say, 3d. and 1s. per pound), and between £1 4s. and £2 16s. per hundredweight for cheese (say, 2½d. and 6d. per pound). These are wholesale prices. We have no means of arriving at the retail prices secured.