

Freezing-company managers are, generally speaking, too lax in the way they treat live-stock. Some of them are too sordid; they prefer men who handle stock rapidly in order to economize working-expenses, which is false economy. The duties of Government Stock Inspectors might be enlarged, so that such officers could generally overlook the treatment of live-stock, and interfere when they see any ill treatment, whether from want of food, water, shelter, overcrowding, or any cause that is injurious to a live animal. Freezing companies, butchers, and railway traffic require supervision.

SLAUGHTERING.

A well-regulated slaughtering establishment always insures that stock is in fit and proper condition before killing takes place; that all animals' blood-circulation is naturally normal, with empty stomachs, so that "bleeding," which is of paramount importance, shall be performed in the most favourable circumstances obtainable. Care is also taken that none but competent men are allowed to handle stock in killing-yards and pens.

Meat is not as well dressed as it should be in this district. Managers of freezing companies admit this, and declare that the attention given by the Legislature to the demands of the labouring-classes renders workmen less subservient to discipline than formerly. It is highly important that discipline shall be maintained and thorough work performed by the dressers of meat. In order to accomplish this, the inspector of slaughtering, who is also the grader, should be a Government officer. Slaughtermen would more willingly submit to the control of such an officer than to that of a man whom they regard as exploiting their labour in the interests of dividend-seeking shareholders.

GRADING.

This is the most important department in connection with the meat business, and ought to be conducted with thoroughness and uniformity in all meat-freezing works. At present such is not the case. Each establishment performs its grading in its own way—in some cases satisfactorily, in others perfunctorily. The remedy for this state of things is Government control, as in the cases of the dairy and flax industries. I consider that an immense benefit will be conferred upon the producers of meat when the grading is performed by Government officials, who will be in a position to do the grading in a uniform and thorough manner, without fear or favour. Early attention should be given to this all-important question, because the welfare of the industry hinges upon the thorough performance of this part of the business.

BRANDING.

The next important question to engage attention is the vexed one of branding. Certain Home agents who profess to be friends of the colony say that we must not brand our meats, because such is disfiguration, and will also prevent traders who sell our meats as English-grown from using the article. These agents argue that they are justified in representing our meat as English-grown, because their customers are opposed to the use of cheap foreign meat. Argentine-meat dealers whom we prosecute for selling that country's product as New Zealand must think commercial morality peculiar. In my opinion, the reason why any Home dealers oppose branding is because they would be robbed of the immense profits that can be made out of our meat by selling it as Home-grown. The time has arrived for the compulsory branding of all meats before exportation. We should allow no dealers opportunity to sell our meats as English-grown. The meat must be sold for what it really is, and when the British public find that the product has been sold to them as English in the past they will be satisfied to continue the use of the meat, and our producers will reap profits that are now taken by English traders who resort to objectionable methods.

WRAPPERS.

False economy is exercised by freezing companies in using flimsy material for wrapping purposes. Instead of using the very stoutest of calico, or, better still, jute, which is really necessary for the protection of the meat during transit from freezing-works in New Zealand to retail depots at Home, the lightest, because cheapest, of material is used. A regulation appears to be necessary compelling the use of serviceable wrappers for all exported meats.

HANDLING BY FREEZING AND SHIPPING COMPANIES.

So much attention is given to the saving of working-expenses when handling frozen meat by freezing and shipping companies that care and efficiency are sacrificed to effect paltry economies, regardless of the damage and loss occasioned by hurried and rough handling. The utmost care and cleanliness should be observed from the moment meat leaves the hands of the dresser and the trimmer in the slaughterhouse until the final consuming-depot is reached at Home. Instead of such treatment, rough and careless handling happens when passing the meat from slaughtering to cooling-room, and from thence to freezing-rooms. From freezing-rooms to shipping-van rough and hurried handling in unclean surroundings is frequently met with. When the wharf is reached still rougher handling is experienced. The meat is violently thrown into dirty slings, the force being sufficient to mark and damage the outer frozen surface. Labourers who stow cargo in the improperly cleaned holds of ships walk upon the meat with dirty bagging covering their boots, discolouring its surface and tearing the flimsy wrappers in their movements. I have never witnessed the treatment that takes place when discharging cargoes at Home, but I am told that the most awful handling possible has occurred. Meat has been dumped into coal-carts and coal-barges and stacked upon a wharf exposed to the weather prior to reaching a receiving-depot. The appearance of meat so handled was shocking in the extreme, and the receiving-depot had to