

The quality of the butter, as a whole, in my mind, did not average very high. While few of the samples were exceptionally fine, some of them were exceedingly poor—sometimes flat and flavorless, other times with positively objectionable flavor. Some of the butter appeared already to be overworked and dull colored, and I saw samples of this description thrown in with better samples, having a rich color.

The baskets into which the butter was thrown were about two feet high, about 18 inches across the top and 15 inches across the bottom. I give these approximate dimensions from memory. Two large and heavy canvas sheets were provided for each basket. They were first wrung out in cold water, laid in the baskets in a way to line the inside of the basket and to surround the butter and cover its top surface—thus affording a complete wrap for the butter.

On a summer's day the butter when received by the buyers is on the warm side; but hard or soft it is unceremoniously plumped, one piece on another, into the baskets. The baskets are packed full to heaping ten inches or more above the top, and the ends of the cloths are then brought over to cover the butter completely. Straw is laid over the top, on the cloth, and the whole tied down. The baskets are marked to indicate the quality or grade, then addressed, loaded immediately on carts, taken to railway station, and shipped to the head quarters of the butter merchant, or, in other words, to the packing or blending house, which is reached within three or four hours by rail.

In warm weather every precaution is taken to keep the butter as cool as possible. Even after the baskets are loaded into the waggons, pailfuls of water are thrown over the top, to be soaked up by the heavy cloths. In one place which I visited the waggons sent to the station to receive the butter were provided with high canvas covers—what on the Western prairies would be called "schooners."

When the butter reaches the town to which it is sent there are waggons waiting, and it is at once hauled to the blending house. What is there done with it is more or less a secret kept from the general public. We all know, however, that there it is colored, worked over, packed, graded, and in a few hours made ready for shipment, and ready, in a most enticing form, for market. We know, too, that little or no salt is added, but that artificial refrigeration is provided, and, possibly, artificial preservatives may be added to the butter. In fact, it is "doctored." The last market I visited was at Carenton, near Isigny. Merchants having headquarters at

Valognes early in the afternoon were at home with their morning's buying. The following day the butter would be all prepared for the London market and shipped by railway to the port of Cherbourg. Leaving Cherbourg in the evening, I found myself the following morning at Southampton, England. There were very few passengers, and the freight appeared to be little else than agricultural products, the bulk of which was Normandy butter, done up in tasteful boxes and buckets, as one sees it in the London market, uniform in appearance and attractive; so unlike the all-sorted mixtures I saw purchased in the Normandy markets, that one could hardly believe it was really and truly one and the same thing!

While we have much to learn from the enterprise of the French butter merchants, I was not much impressed with the Normandy system as a whole, nor, indeed, with the butter with which it deals. A year or two ago the French dairy-

men were reputed to be in advance of all competitors in the English market. Now the Danes are placing themselves ahead, and in Denmark the blending system is growing out of favor.

As to the intrinsic quality of Normandy butter, it is not what, because of its reputation in the London market, it is popularly supposed to be. The quality as it comes from the churn, and is sold to the butter merchants, is not better than the average quality of Canadian butter at the same stage of existence. Yet the one is the noted Normandy butter much in favor in the London market, and the other is the notorious Canadian "axe grease" which takes second place to margarine! The great difference is in the



THE SHAW FARM.

system of preparing for and placing in the market, and in the length of time which places it on the consumer's table.

To the consumer the quality of Normandy butter appears to be very uniform. A dealer asserted that there was little or no difference between the receipts of August 31st and those of December 31st. But, while one great merit of Normandy butter is its uniformity, yet as it is bought in the market fresh from the churn it is of all grades of quality, of all shades of color, all flavors, all degrees of solidity. What might be its lack of uniformity if the butter makers had the whole care of it all through—working, coloring, packing—if there were no system of putting it on the market?

What saves the Normandy butter is the fact that it is taken from the peasant directly from the churn, as it were, and falls into the hands of shrewd, skillful business-men. By them it is assorted according to quality, handled with all necessary precautions against changes in temperature, it is well worked