

echo of empty wool lofts, and users were waiting patiently for the opportunity of replenishing their stocks. Just as high prices for cotton and wheat stimulated the American planter and agriculturist, so to-day's high prices are stimulating the wool growers of the world.

In various parts of the world pastoralists are busily at work increasing the number of sheep, as well as their wool-bearing character. In Australia especially, flockmasters are breeding a class of sheep that will produce a heavier fleece. The quality might not be as fine as was the case ten or fifteen years ago, but if the Commonwealth ever again did pasture the number of sheep it did in 1895, instead of turning out 1,600,000 bales it would reach 2,000,000, if not over. It was practically agreed that it took very little more to maintain a good well bred animal than it did one of inferior breed. In South Africa, too, there are signs of an awakening there, leading farmers have within the last four months been over in Australia and purchased 4,000 ewes and 3,000 rams of the best sheep stock, and these are bound to leave behind some good results.



Fencing in New Zealand—bush clearing. Our special correspondent on his favorite horse.

#### ITEMS.

The latest wheeze in adulteration consists of margarine and mashed potatoes! Recently in London a dealer was charged and fined for selling margarine containing 10 per cent of mashed potatoes.

Margarine manufacturers and dealers have for many years oppressed and harassed the poor dairyman, but now apparently the tables are turned, and soon a margarine adulteration bill will have to be put on the statute book.

Australian butter is arriving in larger quantities than usual, and the market is quiet in consequence, as prices are expected to go lower.

Bacon is also cheaper, and it is a good thing for all concerned that such is the case, for consumers were unwilling to pay recent figures, and were turning their attention to fresh pork, rabbits, etc.

The cheese market is dull, owing to present values curtailing consumption; prices, however, remain firm.

Our elections for local authorities are just over, and have resulted in a victory for the Moderates, whose plans are to keep within present bounds, if not to reduce the rates, which have become very burdensome of late. If they can only do this it will mean that everybody will have more money to spend on food and pleasures.

A. W. S.

#### New Zealand Letter

From the heavy rains spoken of in my last notes, we received full compensation in the August following (which is our last month of winter), being a month of perfect spring, and following up now to 24th September, with a growth that has hardly ever been experienced in the history of the colony, the result being

#### "A PERFECT" LAMMING SEASON"

No cold, wet weather, but beautiful mild sunny days with occasional showers, and so few losses in the lambing that heavy percentages have been the rule, and walking through a healthy flock of ewes the country seems literally alive with lambs. Fat sheep have maintained late prices, and all through it has been a good season for shepherds, except some few graziers who gave extreme prices for stores in the autumn in anticipation of last year's prices, which were not maintained within quite 5s. per head.

#### CATTLE

have ruled about the same for some time, but prime turnip-fed beef coming forward has given a spurt to

settled throughout New Zealand, and it would be difficult to find a single butter making institution of any pretensions whatever that pays out in any other way.

#### FLAX.

The war in the Philippines having closed that port for export of manilla has caused quite a boom in our flax (fomium tenax) industry. Fortunes have been made in a short time in the sale of lands suitable for its growth. Swamps that were regarded as almost valueless have been partially drained, and the flax, which seemed to be lying dormant and only seen in scattered places, has now sprung up in some areas looking as if planted. Mills have been erected on the ground in localities where before it was regarded as valueless on account of bad roads and general inaccessibility. The Government has appointed graders, and it is expected that good will result from a better class being produced. It is chiefly used at present in the manufacture of binder twine, for which it is eminently suitable on account of its extreme length and strength of fibre, and large quantities are exported to



Herd of New Zealand pedigree Shorthorns in bush clearing.

prices on account of extra quality, but like sheep not equal to last year's rates.

#### DAIRY COWS

have come forward in large numbers, as at this time of year those who desire a change do so, and go in for sheep or fattening, but the butter market still rising there have realized high rates, and in some instances whole dairies have "quitted" at extremely high prices.

#### THE BUTTER

market again—it is always changing for the better—with instruction to factory managers and better conditions prevailing on the farm a superior article is produced, and as a consequence home buyers come out regularly every year on purpose to secure the coming season's output, and the rise has been from one cent to three cents in some cases. One of our great co-operative dairy associations has announced to their suppliers that they will give one penny halfpenny (3 cents) in advance of last year's price in anticipation of the rise, their butter being sent to London and sold on commission by one of the largest butter dealing firms there.

I note that you have still under discussion, "Should Milk be Paid for on the Babcock Test?"

That question has been definitely

Canada and the United States, as well as being manufactured locally for home requirements and exporting to Australia.

#### HORSES.

As in the days of George Stephenson and railways we were told that as soon as the electric tram service started the class of horses used in the tram work would necessarily be a drug on the market, but the dairy industry particularly has given a spurt to that useful class of horse, and they are now commanding higher prices than ever. We have had spring sales established in the north for years past, and at one auction sale a thousand have been entered and mostly "quitted." Southern buyers, and even from India, come regularly and pick up good quality for their markets. A great many ponies to drive and for polo purposes, besides first class hacks, are taken away every season to India. Heavy drafts have been selling at extreme rates and for city work have been hard to procure. Some few years ago prices were ruling extremely high for first class heavy draft mares, and even at these rates were snapped up by southern buyers and taken away south. Since that time there has been quite a shortage in that particular class in our northern markets. The country

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