

CHAPTER IV.—FROM OVERSEAS PASTURES TO BRITISH PORTS.

It is a long journey from the wide open spaces of the southern hemisphere to the table of the British consumer. Starting from the pastures, the stock is drafted either to sales-yards, or direct from the farms to the freezing-works. Stock bought at sales-yards are usually drafted at once to the works, but stock bought on farms await instructions as to the time of forwarding. On arriving at the works, the stock is usually rested in adjacent paddocks before being killed. The dressed and weighed carcasses pass to a cooling chamber, where they hang for a day in order that all body heat escapes before they pass into the refrigerating chamber. Government Veterinary Inspectors examine all stock before killing and after dressing; every carcass passed fit for human consumption carries a certificate in the form of a tag which is fastened to it and remains attached until the carcass reaches the market in this country. After being frozen, the carcasses are "bagged" in cotton webbing—beef being also wrapped in hessian—and piled in a cold store attached to the freezing works where they remain until they are placed in the refrigerated holds of steamers bound for British ports. Chilled beef is not piled but hung both in store and ship. The control of these operations is the function of the companies which own the freezing works. Sometimes these companies have their own organisation for handling the meat on arrival here; sometimes they work through agents. Then again there are large importing firms which do not own freezing works but operate on the British market on their own account and obtain their supplies direct from overseas.

The Dominion (*i.e.*, the Australian and New Zealand) trade, and the South American trade are, however, distinct in their trading conditions and methods. Each has its own characteristic organisation and, for clearness, each is separately described.

(i) **Dominion Trade.**—There are several classes of firms engaged in the Australian and New Zealand meat trade. Roughly they may be classified as follows :—

(1) British firms owning works in the Dominions and possessing their own selling organisation or wholesale depôts in this country.

(2) Dominion firms owning works, with agencies in this country.

(3) Farmers' co-operative works in the Dominions having agents in this country.

(4) Operators in both countries who do not own works.

Before the meat-works in the Dominion open, they must have a certain head of stock at their command. In some cases, the works have their own farms. All the works have expert