

years to come. The general conclusion at which the Commission have arrived respecting coal is that the industry is already firmly established, though labouring under some disabilities, and that it will in course of time attain a very flourishing condition, even if left entirely unassisted. They consider it, however, of so great importance, and so peculiarly situated, that the Government would be justified in going further in the direction of hastening its progress than in the case of almost any other. The Commission feel themselves unable to make definite recommendations on that point at present, owing to their not having had time to examine the position of the local industry in that part of the colony where the largest and most valuable deposits are found, and where the aid of the Government is most particularly needed. The Commission are, however, unanimous in deprecating the imposition of an import duty on coal, because it enters more or less into the economy of every local industry in the country.

THE WOOLLEN INDUSTRY.

The Commission were much gratified by the result of their inquiries as to the condition of the woollen industry, which will be seen by the evidence to be well established, and to require no artificial assistance of any kind. The only grievance which the woollen manufacturers complain of is the operation of the Employment of Females Acts. The Commission took great pains to investigate that matter; but, after giving it careful consideration, they are unable to recommend any alteration of the law in so far as it affects the length of the hours of work. They are satisfied that the Act affords a substantial and valuable protection to female and youthful operatives; and, though they recognize both that the local manufacturers are placed at some disadvantage by it as against manufacturers in countries where no such law exists, and also that in the woollen factories now in existence no serious evils would be likely to arise under the present excellent management from a repeal of it, they nevertheless consider that the well-being of an industrious and comparatively helpless class of the community is so effectually secured by it that they have no hesitation in deciding as they have done. They would point out that the condition of factory hands as a class in the future, or in other trades even at present, cannot be judged of by the condition of those employed to day in liberally-conducted establishments such as are described in the notes of their inquiry at Dunedin. On the question of legal holidays they found both employers and employed unanimous in condemning the present system, which appears to be a positive hardship to those whom it is designed to benefit. They find that the days prescribed by the Act as holidays are not regarded as special occasions by many of the workpeople, and are not observed by the community at large. The consequence is, that the workpeople are obliged to be idle on the days when their friends and neighbours are at work, and are denied the holidays which their employers would otherwise readily allow them when their friends and neighbours desist from work. The Commission therefore recommend that clause 4 of the Employment of Females Act of 1873 should be repealed, with the exception of that part of it which requires a half-holiday to be allowed on Saturday.

THE EARTHENWARE INDUSTRY.

The Commission find that the pottery and earthenware industry, though labouring under considerable disadvantages, is steadily making headway, and is likely soon to become of considerable importance. One great drawback to this industry is the excessive cost of bringing the manufactured goods to market; and the Commission, considering the great public good to be derived from this industry, recommend that the railway charges on its products should be reduced to the lowest paying rate.

LEATHER TRADES.

The industries of boot and shoe, saddlery and harness making, are evidently now well established, though suffering from the general depression of all trade. The remissions made in the modification of the tariff last session have resulted satisfactorily. From the evidence, however, several tradesmen seem even now to be unaware of the extent to which the raw material is admitted free; but they are