

Basket-making was not largely represented, but that exhibited appeared to be remarkably good. Sufficient attention has not yet been paid in this colony to the cultivation of the osier required for this industry, as large quantities are imported from Tasmania, where the character of the soil and climate is not nearly so favourable for their growth as in New Zealand. Moreover, the cultivation of the osier willow along the banks of streams would afford great indirect benefits in restraining the rivers, and obviating the evils arising from the periodical floods.

FIBRES.

Rope, line, and twine, from Phormium hemp, together with the manufactures from it, had several representatives. The quality appeared excellent; and it is satisfactory to find that, although all the sanguine anticipations respecting this material have not been fulfilled, it is yet becoming thoroughly established for useful employment of industry.

The manufacture of fishing-nets, as an employment for light labour, is suggested by the excellent exhibits of Mr. Every, who illustrates by model specimens the various kinds that are used by fishermen in the sea and rivers. The arrangement of some of these nets is highly ingenious.

MINERAL PRODUCTS.

The exhibits derived from the mineral kingdom have considerable interest. Among the natural products, the fine blocks of coal are the most conspicuous exhibits; and I was much interested at the very marked improvement in the quality of the coal from the Kaitangata seam since I first examined it in 1862, due, no doubt, to its being now excavated from under a better class of roof. In appearance it now approaches some varieties of the West Coast coal; and recent analyses of this coal, from the deepest levels, prove that it contains a less percentage of constitutional water as it is followed to the dip. Another coal, that has changed for the better since the first outcrop sample was examined, is that from the Nightcaps, the block exhibited being nearly equal in quality to the Kaitangata coal.

No important additions appear to have been made to the list of minerals found in Otago as exhibited in 1865; but several lodes, only known then from hand specimens, have been partially opened up, and a few new localities discovered. The work of the real miner, except for gold, has still to be commenced, not only in Otago but in other parts of New Zealand, and the field that it offers for skilled labour is a most promising one.

The exhibit which most attracted my attention was that of the patent artificial stone made by Messrs. Hibberd and Co. It seemed to afford a material so well adapted for building purposes, especially in those parts of the colony where no natural building-stones are available, that I visited the works at Green Island for the purpose of inspecting the works. Although the machinery employed is still in a rudimentary stage, it has great capabilities for improvement in detail, and appears to me to have achieved the principle upon which the process must be based. The stone is made by compressing by percussion a mixture of Portland cement and sharp sand, in proper proportions for the work intended, in moulds, which are very ingeniously contrived. The blocks are cast hollow, so as to give a maximum of strength for the material used, and are so formed that they can be readily keyed and dovetailed. The result is that buildings can be constructed with greater facility than ordinary concrete, which are very light on the foundation, and yet have every element of stability. By adopting very simple contrivances as safeguards, I see no reason why large structures built of this material should not be made almost earthquake-proof. From inquiries which I made, respecting the actual cost of houses which have been built of Mr. Hibberd's patent stone, I find that the cost hardly, if at all, exceeds that of a substantial building in timber, such as rimu—or about £100 a room for a first-class dwelling-house. Many other articles, such as drain-pipes and kerbing-blocks, are made by the same process; and Mr. Hibberd hopes, before long, to be able to use cement of his own manufacture from locally-obtained material, in place of the imported Portland cement.

POTTERY

There are four entries of pottery in the catalogue—from Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Milton in Otago. These comprise drain-pipes, from the smallest to the largest size that are used for agricultural or sanitary purposes; chimney-pots, ornamental vases and flower-pots, and crockeryware of every description. The articles exhibited by the Milton works comprise dinner- and breakfast-services, teapots, and other articles of common domestic use of very good shapes and patterns, and afford proof that excellent materials exist in the locality for the development of this industry. Both at Sydney and Melbourne the New Zealand pottery attracted much attention, and great surprise was expressed at the advanced state to which this industry had already reached.

A most interesting series of exhibits were the mechanical appliances made by Messrs. Watt and Co., of Dunedin, including all the most modern form of electric communicators, and philosophical apparatus, such as telephones, alarms, signals, tide gauges, and a great variety of galvanic batteries, all of which showed excellent workmanship and thorough knowledge of the principles involved.

Of alimentary products there were 71 exhibits, showing grains of all kinds grown in the district; meal, flour, and starch, biscuits, confectionery, cheese, preserved meats, hams and bacon, groceries, ale, stout, liqueurs, fruits, and even grape wines—all produced or manufactured in the colony,—proving the immense variety of directions in which skilled labour and capital are finding profitable employment.

In concluding this brief sketch of the impression I received from what was necessarily a cursory examination of the Exhibition, I must bear testimony to the great enthusiasm which it appears to have evoked among the exhibitors, and to the untiring zeal with which its promoters and managers carried out their programme. The success of the Exhibition, as a means of enlightening and assuring the crowds of visitors who thronged it as to the substantial and various resources of the colony, is beyond all doubt, and its influence in guiding and strengthening future efforts will have a beneficial effect for long after its close.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

JAMES HECTOR.