

compare in general terms the character of the exhibits with the display of New Zealand industrial products made on previous occasions of a similar nature.

Notwithstanding its title, the Exhibition was, on the whole, of a local character rather than being representative of New Zealand; but, nevertheless, the collection of articles of New Zealand production far exceeded, both in number and interest, the exhibits of the same kind at any of the International Exhibitions of Philadelphia, Sydney, or Melbourne.

The progress which the colony has made, as shown in various important branches of manufacture during the period which has elapsed since 1876, was most strikingly displayed, and proved that the application of skilled labour is now finding steady development.

At the time of the Philadelphia Exhibition of 1876 manufacturing industries were so little developed that they are not even enumerated in the volume of Statistics for that year, and the colony was represented on that occasion almost entirely by raw products.

At the Christchurch Exhibition the natural, and especially the mineral, resources of the colony were almost unrepresented, so that the Exhibition had entirely lost the characteristic appearance that so distinguished the New Zealand Courts at all previous Exhibitions. In place of the display of materials for construction and raw products, the Exhibition presented the aspect of a commercial bazaar, in which merchandise of colonial production could be ordered according to sample. This is an important advance, as it greatly increases the usefulness of such Exhibitions, as by their securing a market they stimulate further production.

A marked feature in this Exhibition was also the large proportion of articles that had their prices affixed. This is a very important element in judging of the real amount of permanence which various manufacturing industries have attained, for it is obvious that a few specimen articles for exhibition can be produced regardless of cost; but it is not until both quality and price can compete with similar imported articles that any particular producing industry can take a permanent place in the economy of the country.

I was astonished and gratified by seeing the large number of articles which fulfilled these conditions, and particularly in the class of goods that are essential requisites either for social convenience or for carrying on the prominent productive industries. Thus, in household fittings, such as fire-grates, ranges, and plumbers' work, the patterns were all excellent, and many novel designs and contrivances were introduced to promote convenience and to save expense. The workmanship appeared, so far as I could judge, to be excellent, and yet the prices were so very moderate that they should command the market against the imported goods. The same may be reported, with even greater force, regarding that most important element in the development of the colony—agricultural implements. The manner in which the manufacturers appear to have studied, and by skilful contrivance met, the peculiar requirements of colonial agriculture is very meritorious.

The best imported models have no doubt been followed, but they are frequently improved and modified in such a manner as to prove that inventive mechanical genius of a high order is now available in the colony.

The progress shown in the art of carriage-building is equally deserving of mention, and the moderate prices marked on most of the exhibits in this class was very remarkable, being, as far as I could judge, from 30 to 40 per cent. less than the cost of similar imported carriages about ten years ago.

The great development of woollen manufactures was the leading feature of the Exhibition, and, perhaps more than any other section, affords evidence of the ease with which complicated mechanical industries can be successfully transplanted to a new country. Woollen goods are certain to become the chief staple commodities of this colony, where every natural facility for their production exists in perfection; but at present they have hardly yet reached the stage of supplying local consumption, as we find from the last statistical returns available (1882) that woollen cloths and hosiery were imported to the value of nearly £200,000 in one year. But a still greater obstruction to the development of this important industry is to be found in the fact that made-up articles of wearing apparel were imported in the same year to the value of £287,000. An attempt to defeat the competition created by these slop goods is perhaps one of the few directions in which protective legislation would be justifiable, as a further development of the business of making up articles of clothing would be the means of affording permanent employment in the large towns for those classes of people that are at present tending to become a burden.

The preference shown for imported slop goods has no deeper foundation than ignorance and prejudice, as it is beyond all doubt that clothing made of colonial fabrics and in the colony are, quality for quality and price for price, more lasting and are far more suitable to the requirements of the climate than most of the imported goods.

As the detailed report, which I have the honour to enclose,* treats fully of the merits of the particular classes of exhibits, it is unnecessary for me to enlarge on the subject; but I have great pleasure in testifying to the great success of the Exhibition as a means of informing the public in a practical manner of the great advance which has been made in the material prosperity of the colony; and I would urge that such Exhibitions, similar in their nature to what are termed the "State Shows" in the United States of America, should be repeated in different parts of the colony at regular intervals, as they constitute one of the most active instruments in the educational development of the adult population in a new country.

In conclusion, I have to express my thanks to the President and Committee, and particularly to the Secretary of the Exhibition, for the courteous assistance which they afforded me.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

JAMES HECTOR.

* This report was not ordered to be printed.