

THURSDAY, 13TH OCTOBER, 1910.

ROBERT HANNAH further examined. (No. 8.)

1 *Mr Hardy* ] When you were last before the Committee we were discussing the question of the branding of boots. Are you authorized to appear for the Wellington merchants and for the manufacturers?—No, I am not; I am representing leather

2. Is it within your knowledge that some of the boot-manufacturers still continue marking their boots with their own brand?—We all do that.

3. Well, does the brand bear the name of your firm?—No.

4. When I speak of your own brand I speak of the distinguishing brand of the firm that is known to the public?—Well, all brands are known to the public. For instance, our brand is known to the public.

5. But is it a brand that is intended to disguise the fact that it is made in New Zealand, or is it plainly your own brand—your own name?—No, our brand is “G.”

6. And what is the reason for your branding your best good with “G” instead of with the name which is so honoured in New Zealand?—Well, I am glad to hear you say that, but we do not brand the best goods “G.” In fact, we found that affected the sale, and we have had to leave that off.

7. What do you brand them, as English or American?—No, we give them different names, keeping as near as possible with the imported brand.

8. You do not intend to deceive the public in any way, do you?—No, we are not deceiving the public.

9. But you are surely not ashamed of your own good name?—No, not personally

10. Would it not advertise your goods if you put your own good name on them?—No.

11. It would not advertise your goods?—No, it might advertise the name, but it would not increase the sale of the goods. That is our weak point.

12. That is what I want to get at, because we want to help the trade as much as we can?—Yes.

13. Is it with the object of palming off New Zealand goods as American or English that you do that?—No, I do not know that you can look at it in that light. If our customers ask for an American boot, of course we supply it, and if they ask for an English boot we supply it; but if they do not ask for either, of course, we certainly put our own first.

14. You believe in what you make yourself?—Yes, certainly

15. But you have not sufficient confidence in what you make yourself to enable you to brand them?—No, it is not the want of confidence on our part, but it is the want of confidence on the part of the public. That is the distinction.

16. Do you not think that New-Zealand-made boots are quite equal to those coming from the older countries?—Yes, I have said so when I was here before.

17. You distinctly think that?—Yes.

18. And yet you have lost faith in your own trade?—No, I have not; but the public has.

19. Can you tell me why the public has?—No. I can judge for myself, but I cannot judge for you

20. But it is not for me, it is for the Committee?—Yes, but we have to put it in that light. That is about the closest form in which I can give you a reply

21. Is it on account of the cutting of trade that the grades have been so reduced—that they have become very poor, and that people have been dissatisfied with them?—No, it is not. I do not think that has anything to do with it. I suppose there is 60 per cent.—probably I might go further, and take a greater percentage, but it is as well to keep within the bounds—of the purchasing public who have an idea that the imported article is better than the locally made article. I presume you can speak from experience on that point.

22. Do you not know as a fact that customers come to you—that is, wholesale customers, and ask specially for your own brands that you have made a name for?—A certain class of goods.

23. For instance, the old French-calf boots that were so much in vogue some years ago?—That is as dead as Julius Cæsar

24. I know that other makes have come in?—Yes.

25. Did they not give great satisfaction for some time?—Yes.

26. And were splendid goods?—Yes.

27. And were made by yourself and others?—Yes.

28. And other goods have come in and put them out?—Yes.

29. At other times the American boots had the run?—Yes.

30. Are there as many American boots imported as there were?—No, they are a dead-letter

31. The English boots have largely supplanted them?—Yes, more than supplanted them.

32. Is it in consequence of the preferential tariff?—Yes; there is no doubt about that.

33. The 11 per cent. made all the difference?—The 12½ per cent.

34. And that has put the American goods out of the market?—Yes.

35. Do you know if many American boots are on the market in England just now?—Well, no. I think they have in the wholesale. The Americans have opened shops in the principal parts of England, and I think that is the principal consumption for American goods.

36. Do you think England is able to make a boot for its own trade?—Undoubtedly

37. And can they make goods to suit our market here?—Well, with a little instruction they can.

38. They can carry out what you want?—Yes.

39. Do you know of some firms that still continue to put the firm's name on their best goods?—Do you mean locally?

40. Yes?—No, I do not.