## Imports of General Machinery, &c. -continued.

	British. £	Foreign. £
Paper-milling machinery (5 per cent.)	10.704	443
(free)	ก๋กรด	
Portable and traction engines	. 357,710	3,402
Printing machinery	000 100	78,424
Refrigerating machinery	74,472	24,259
Woodworking machinery (free)	72,389	48,692
,, (5 per cent.)	1 704	6,704
Woollen-milling machinery (5 per cent.)	. 109,312	502
,, (free)	12,804	
Machinery unenumerated (20 per cent.)	653,038	213,856
,, (10 per cent.) (eight years)	9,535	40,702
,, (5 per cent.) (eleven years)	66,813	13,574
,, (free) (ten years)	63,920	7,314
Machinery, parts of and materials for (dutiable)	22,904	3,877
,, (free)	154 101	29,098
	£5,832,534	£2,241,087

being a grand total of £8,073,621, or equal to £770,329 per annum.

As there were no records kept of electric machinery for the eight years prior to 1908, or of gas and oil engines for motors for six years prior to 1906, the above total would be consider-

ably increased if the imports for these years were added.

There is an important and very serious general complaint of the difficulty in procuring boy-labour for blacksmithing, boilermaking, and moulding shops--in fact, in many centres it The reason is simply not procurable—and this means a serious menace to these industries. given to me was that lads do not want to become apprenticed to such begrimed and dirty industries. I am convinced—though it is a serious statement to make, and one which opens up a very debatable question -- that this state of affairs is largely brought about by too much uniformity in the finishing course of our primary schools, and this is intensified at the junction of the primary and the secondary courses. These should be continuous; but I consider that, at this point, alternative options or divergent opportunities should be afforded to the scholars, on the one hand leading to technical, agricultural, or manual pursuits, and on the other to clerical and literary entertainments. I am also firmly of the belief that if lads in the primary school, from the Fourth Standard up, were given frequent opportunities of visiting not only engineering and mechanical workshops, but also all available manufacturing industries, so as to give them some insight, knowledge, and acquaintance with what manufacturing and its methods really mean, that a very different impression would be created in the minds of the youths from what now obtains, and it would be of immense assistance to them in selecting a course suited to their inclinations when the divergent stage above referred to was reached. The present uniformity in our education system seems to predispose lads for clerical and literary pursuits; and the parents, I fear, are inclined to direct them into these channels, because, perhaps, they are cleaner and less begrimed; but the result is that an oversupply of this class is produced, while few indeed will offer-for want of opportunity of enlightenment-for technical, agricultural, or manual pursuits.

But to return to my subject: It might be, if all the iron industries were busier and in full swing by means of a further protective tariff and constant and regular employment (with good wages earned by boilermakers, blacksmiths, and moulders), that the fathers and others now engaged in these industries might induce their sons and others to follow in their footsteps and to prefer black hands and face and a good wage (with a trade at their command) to a clean

collar and indifferent wage in clerical or similar employment.

Regarding the Arbitration and Conciliation Acts, the evidence I have taken, with but few exceptions, goes to show that most of the employers of labour would prefer to return to the old system of "freedom of contract," and this apparently is the opinion of many labour unions also—considering the number of them that have cancelled their registration under the Arbitration Act. Many employers who started under the previous "freedom-of-contract" system have still in their employ good men who have been with them for thirty-five years downwards, and with whom they have never had any trouble, nor have these men had to ask for increase

in pay, because ability was invariably recognized and paid for accordingly.

Evidence also goes to show that even now many employers pay good men a much higher wage than the arbitration awards. Their great complaint against the Act is the compulsory clause compelling an equal wage to capable and incapable alike, which they contend is all in favour of the incompetent hand, while the position of the efficient man is not improved. As an example of this I may mention the following: The Arbitration Court stipulated that twelve boxes of small brass castings per day, at 10s., shall be the day's work. An old employee of a certain firm who returned from Australia asked to be put on at the same wage—10s. per day and Is. per box over the twelve—and he turned out regularly without trouble sixteen boxes per day of eight hours; but the other hands made it so uncomfortable for him that he eventually left and returned to Australia. If the awards are to be of any use to the employers their duration should be for periods of from seven to ten years: this would encourage capital and give greater confidence to manufacturers in enlarging their premises or in installing up-to-date machinery, for they argue that so long as industrial and labour conditions are so unsettled little or no capital can be found for investment in manufacturing enterprises, and so progression is impeded.