

1881.
NEW ZEALAND.

ASHBURTON INDUSTRIAL EXHIBITION

(REPORT ON THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

The Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY to Mr. E. WAKEFIELD, M.H.R.

SIR,—

Colonial Secretary's Office, Wellington, 3rd March, 1881.

I have the honor to inform you that a letter has been received by the Honorary Secretary to the Managing Committee of the Exhibition proposed to be held at Ashburton, on the 17th, 18th, and 19th instant, requesting that a member of the Royal Commission may be appointed in order to report thereon

Although the Commission, of which you were chairman last year, may be considered to have lapsed, the Government would be much obliged to you if you would be good enough to attend at the proposed Ashburton Exhibition, and report upon the proceedings and exhibits in the same manner as you did at Christchurch.

Edward Wakefield, Esq., M.H.R., Timaru.

I have, &c.,

THOMAS DICK.

No. 2.

Mr. E. WAKEFIELD, M.H.R., to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Timaru, 10th March, 1881.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, No. 291, of the 3rd instant, inviting me to attend the Exhibition of Local Industries at Ashburton, and to report thereon.

I have the honor to state that I shall be happy to comply with your request.

I have placed myself in communication with the Exhibition Committee, and I will proceed to Ashburton on the morning of the 24th instant.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

EDWARD WAKEFIELD.

No. 3.

Mr. E. WAKEFIELD, M.H.R., to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY

SIR,—

Timaru, 30th March, 1881.

I have the honor to report that I attended the Ashburton Exhibition of Local Industries, which was opened by His Excellency the Governor on the 24th instant, and spent some days in examining the exhibits and ascertaining various particulars regarding them.

As an effort to arouse public interest in the productions of the colony, the Exhibition was eminently successful, all the available space being fully occupied, and the attendance being such as to amply repay the promoters and exhibitors for their time, trouble, and expense. The service rendered to the colony by those who originate and conduct the laborious management of demonstrations of this kind cannot easily be too highly valued. The spirit of inquiry into the question of increasing the number and extent of the productions of the country, as a means of affording new outlets for capital and new employments for the people, is a matter of large public importance; and those who devote their energies to stimulating it cannot but be regarded as public benefactors. The Government will, I am sure, be pleased to learn that the Ashburton Exhibition abundantly answered the true purpose for which it was instituted, that, namely, of attracting the intelligent attention of all classes to the materials for industrial occupation that lie around them, and instructing them, as far as means would allow, in the methods of utilizing those materials.

I beg now to furnish you with my notes on the principal exhibits which appeared to me to have an economic value.

MINERAL PRODUCTIONS.

The exhibits of coal were very remarkable. They included specimens, some of them of great size, from Mount Hutt (a recent discovery), Brockley (Whitecliffs), Rockwood (Rakaia end of Malvern Hills), Springfield, Mount Somers, and Kakahu, in Canterbury, as well as several from the Grey and the Buller, on the West Coast. It will be seen from this group of exhibits that coal of a serviceable character is found in large deposits throughout the whole length of the range of hills skirting the Canterbury plains, a fact which affords the best prospects for the industrial future of that part of the colony. The local coals are already largely in use, and the notice which they gained at the Exhibition is calculated to lead to increased enterprise in bringing them into consumption. The delay in the construction of the Mount Somers Railway was represented to me as the only obstacle that has prevented the wholesale development of the deposits of that spot; and the high rate of carriage on the railways generally was mentioned as a great discouragement to the coal industry. Among the exhibits in this department were several specimens of bituminous and anthracite coal, the latter of which is said to be of great value. These were from the hills near the gorge of the Rakaia. There were also shown a very interesting group of specimens found in the course of their explorations by the engineers who have recently been engaged in seeking an available route for a railway from Canterbury to the West Coast. These included nine or ten different samples of coal, some of them of a superior class. Several remarkably fine specimens of coke were also shown.

The exhibits of building-stone were numerous, and of excellent quality. Among these the white stone from Mount Somers, where it is said to exist in vast quantities, was the most prominent. The well-known and highly-valued Oamaru stone was exhibited side by side with it, in cubes prepared for the purpose of comparison by weight. Tried by this test the Mount Somers stone was obviously superior. A carved monumental tablet of Oamaru stone, however, exhibited as having been exposed to south-west weather for six years, and displaying chisel-marks and fine edges still unimpaired, proved that stone to be of a quality scarcely to be surpassed in the world for the finer purposes of the builders' art. An excellent white stone from Albury, and another from Kakahu, almost equally good, were also shown. This latter, I am informed, is the material used in the large and handsome Catholic church at Temuka, which forms such a prominent land-mark from the Rangitata to Timaru. Specimens of blue-grit from Dunedin, valuable hard building-stones for rough work, were also exhibited. In worked stone, a large plain font in solid Oamaru stone, and a substantial and slightly mantelpiece in Castle Creek stone, were exhibited, together with a mantelpiece and tables executed at Christchurch from Italian marbles. Limestones of various kinds from Malvern and Kakahu, together with fine specimens of lime burnt from them, were shown. The pure white chalk from Oxford appeared to great advantage. There was also a most interesting exhibit of cement made from this chalk, with which was shown a specimen of real Portland cement, which it is hoped the Oxford cement will ultimately rival. In this group appeared some valuable samples of mortar and cement made from the well-known Mahurangi limestones. I regard these experiments in the production of hydraulic cement as of great importance, and consider the progress demonstrated by these exhibits as highly encouraging. One of the finest exhibits in this department was that of fire-bricks from Springfield. These beautiful productions were highly finished and of superlative quality; and I was assured by professional men of whom I made inquiries that they were not only better, but 25 per cent. cheaper, than imported articles of the same description. Fire-bricks from the Brunner clays were also shown; but, though probably possessing valuable serviceable qualities, they did not compare at all favourably with those from Springfield in point of finish. Common bricks and flooring-tiles made at Ashburton were shown, displaying excellent handiwork, but not free from the prevailing defects of all New Zealand bricks, the result, probably, partly of inferior clay and partly of short burning.

Drain-pipes of magnificent quality, from huge cylinders down to slender tubes for household purposes, were shown by several Canterbury exhibitors, accompanied by fine specimens of brown, glazed, and white (terra cotta) work from fire-clay; chimney-tops, garden-tiles, coarse pottery, and, a most useful and ingenious description of sink-traps, with movable grates, from the same material. The exhibits of terra cotta from Malvern were also excellent, and the whole of this group demonstrated unmistakably that this important branch of industry has been completely mastered in the colony. A good exhibit of gas-tar, pitch, and asphalt, with specimens of their application to pavement, street-channelling, and the lining of cisterns—all Ashburton work—deserves mention here. A small sample of hematite from Nelson was shown—a most valuable painting material, that is not nearly so widely used as it ought to be.

Pottery of various kinds formed a most gratifying feature of the exhibition. From Christchurch came brown-ware, glazed-ware, jars of all sorts and sizes, demijohns, stone-ware, Rockingham-ware (a homely kind of crockery of rustic appearance), figured and coloured goods, garden-vases, fountains, and filters. All these classes are now produced at prices that enable the manufacturer to undersell the importer. From Otago (Milton works) came excellent specimens of table and toilet services, quite equal to the ordinary sorts of imported goods, ornamental flower-pots of great elegance and finish, sets of table crockery made in a particular design to order, and other articles of common use, not to be distinguished from those imported. From Dunedin came clay-pipes of various patterns, including all the more familiar forms of "cutty" and "dhudeen."

Porcelain-work of the most beautiful description was displayed by the manufacturer, from Christchurch, who made the various articles before the eyes of the visitors. The materials for this work are imported at present, but it is confidently hoped that suitable ones will be obtained from Malvern, which seems to be a laboratory of nature. Kaolin and feldspar have both been found there, but not yet in sufficient purity for the purposes of this trade. Specimens were exhibited. The plumbago from Rockwood (Rakaia) makes good crucibles and muffles for high temperatures. Specimens of this singular substance were shown and their qualities explained.

WROUGHT METALS.

Cooking-ranges and washing-boilers in great variety were exhibited by Christchurch and Ashburton makers. In the common lines the imported articles are driven out of the market by the manu-

factured, which are excellently finished, very durable, and very cheap. A most ingenious automatic washing-machine, which ought to be used in every household, was shown in full working. It consists of an ordinary washing-copper, with a second copper boiler fitted inside, leaving half an inch between the two. The upper boiler is perforated at the bottom and at short distances round the edge, and the water between the two, boiling over through the holes into the upper boiler with great force, effectually dispenses with all rubbing or scrubbing, or handling of the clothes. I witnessed the machine in full work, and came unhesitatingly to the conclusion that if anything would wash a blackamoor white, that would. The invention and manufacture are both due to a working boiler-maker at Christchurch.

In agricultural machinery flexible-tined harrows from Gore, Southland, a recent patent, attracted particular attention. This appears to be a most valuable implement, from its effectiveness, adaptability, cheapness, and remarkable simplicity. A noble double-furrow plough, from Christchurch, was also shown, and a large assortment of dairy and domestic machinery, pumps, fire-engines, and other articles in iron. Some excellent garden-seats in iron and kauri timber, with ornamental bronzed-iron backs, made at Ashburton, were well worthy of notice.

The exhibits of tinware were numerous and very good. This industry seems to be firmly established and rapidly expanding. Excellent specimens were shown of plain, crystallized, japanned, and painted ware, applied to all kinds of domestic purposes. Among the articles specially noticeable were preserve tins with lids made to be sealed with wax or fat, stamped goods, moulds, teapots, teapot hinges, and buttons in tin and brass, plain and japanned. This button manufacture deserves a word of particular remark. The buttons, which are exactly similar to the common imported metal trouser buttons, are made from the waste pieces of metal forming the refuse of the tin trade, which would otherwise be simply an encumbrance to be got rid of. The manufacturer stated that, though he had only recently begun this work, he already had large orders, and that a hundred men could be employed in the button trade alone.

Good ridging and spouting, made in Ashburton; churns, meat-safes of excellent design and workmanship, washers for fixing iron roofing, a new and useful local industry; wire-work chairs and stands from Timaru, and an excellent combination bath and lavatory, made in Ashburton, also deserve mention in this department.

Carriages were shown in great variety by Ashburton and Christchurch manufacturers, displaying unexceptionable workmanship, and a number of novel and ingenious contrivances. The lack of native hard woods suitable for this trade, and the desirability of establishing plantations of hickory, ash, oak, and elm, were again brought to my notice. My importunities to the Government on this subject, however, have been so persistent, and have hitherto met with such a kindly and courteous neglect, that I will not venture to renew them here.

The exhibits of locally-made saddlery and harness were admirable. In this trade, as in so many others, the local manufacturer easily competes with the importer in the finest class of work, but is beaten by machinery and cheap labour in the wholesale production of the commoner sorts.

WOODWARE.

The exhibits of furniture in mottled totara, honeysuckle, rimu, blackwood, oak, walnut, and kauri were displayed in a drawing-room compartment at one end of the main building of the Exhibition, and excited general admiration. The beauty of the native woods for the cabinet-makers' purposes is hardly to be surpassed, but an exhibit equally interesting with those of native woods in the grain was that of superb furniture made in a variety of designs in japanned, gilt, and glazed kauri, a wood which is so easily worked and so true of surface as to afford singular facilities for decorative and artistic furniture, the main cost of which is in the labour. Thus, a handsome black-and-gold sideboard, of large size, in exact imitation of Japanese work, and fit to adorn any room in the country, was exhibited as the result of fourteen days' work at Christchurch. A magnificent sideboard of antique pattern in rimu was also shown as a specimen of the economical application of cheap native wood. It was polished so as to bring out the rich grain of the wood, and the interior was highly finished in white pine. It was called a "clerical" sideboard, and contained deep bins for the port and claret, which are popularly supposed to form the staple beverages of the dignitaries of the Church. It did not appear to me to be suited to the clergy of this country but it was certainly an instructive illustration of the use to which the native woods may be put in a country where profuse household expenditure is the exception. Black-and-gold tripod flower-stands, mirror brackets, handsome bedroom furniture in kauri and white pine, canopied bedstead with spring mattress, and other articles of equal merit, all of Ashburton manufacture, were exhibited in this department; while from Dunedin came a large and useful cabinet desk of cedar. Two large blocks of mottled totara, from Peel Forest, showing in what part of the tree this peculiar grain is found, and displaying its beauties upon their polished surface, formed a most attractive exhibit. With these were sections of ribbon-wood, showing the separation of the layers, and accompanied by stripped lengths, capable of being used as bast by gardeners, or for the manufacture of baskets and other articles requiring a tough, light, and pliable material. An exceedingly beautiful collection of inlaid native woodwork from Christchurch, a number of fine specimens of fretwork in white wood executed at Ashburton, wood carvings for the internal decoration of houses, Venetian blinds, caned chairs, and a number of smaller articles of use or ornament, added greatly to the interest of this class of exhibits. A great variety of specimens of artificial graining, displaying a high degree of skill, were also shown by Christchurch tradesmen. Baskets of all shapes and sizes made from osiers, and marked at very low prices, showed that this useful industry is fairly established. A set of strong, rough, but very shapely and serviceable baskets made at Mount Somers, entirely of ribbon-wood, and also marked at strikingly low prices, attracted special attention by the novelty and ingenuity of the manufacture.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE.

The exhibits of grain were not very numerous, but their quality was particularly fine, some of the samples, grown on the driest part of the plains, bearing testimony to what can be done by careful selection and good farming. Wheats were shown varying from 64½ lb. to 67 lb. to the bushel, oats

up to 51 lb., and barley up to 55 lb. A sample of mummy wheat, the bearded grain of ancient Egypt, grown at Ashburton from seed taken out of a mummy case, and probably 3,000 years old, was exhibited as a curiosity. In appearance it is a very strong milling-wheat, but I was informed that it has defects which make it unsaleable, except at a nominal price. I have induced some of the best farmers in this district to sow some of it for experimental purposes, however, for I cannot help thinking that the children of Israel knew what they were about when they speculated so largely in this cereal. "There is corn in Egypt" is one of the oldest proverbs on record. I was pleased to see a very good collection of farm and garden seeds, grown near Ashburton, with a view to supplying the market on a large scale. This ought to be a much more extensive branch of agriculture than it is at present; and it is sure to become so as soon as the export trade in meat necessitates high farming. Fine samples of flour, oatmeal, and pearl barley from Christchurch and Timaru were shown. A very interesting diagram was displayed in this department, exhibiting in coloured lines running across tabulated columns the fluctuations in the price of wheat, oats, and barley for the last ten years. I was informed that this valuable compilation had been lithographed, and I have reason to think it will be found useful by farmers and all who are concerned in the grain trade. There were four exhibits of potato products, namely, two of starch, and one each of potato-flour and perfumed toilet-powder. The starch was of fine quality, and showed that this useful material can be successfully produced. These samples were made by hand, one at Christchurch and the other at Ashburton, merely as experiments. There seems to be no doubt, however, that by the aid of machinery this industry might be profitably established on an extensive scale.

I gave particular attention to an interesting exhibit of five samples of sugar-beet grown at Ashburton, with the saccharine matter in two stages of preparation and the pressed pulp. Some of the roots shown were stated by the exhibitor to be of inferior quality for the production of sugar, but one sample was said to be of the right sort. I could not form any opinion as to the possibility of the manufacture of beet-sugar being profitably pursued, but I gathered from my inquiries that the yield of roots at Ashburton would be very great, something like forty tons to the acre; and the exhibitor, who is experienced in the beet-sugar industry in Germany, assured me that the percentage of saccharine matter in the expressed liquor is 15 per cent. from Ashburton-grown roots, whilst in Germany 12 per cent. is considered satisfactory. The samples included one of the juice merely pressed from the roots, and one of the same juice reduced to the condition of molasses. The next stage towards the production of sugar would have required the aid of machinery and chemicals that are not at present available. A specimen of German beet-sugar was shown with the other articles; and the whole exhibit was a highly instructive one.

Chicory grown, roasted, and prepared for sale at Ashburton was exhibited in all its stages, from the roots to the marketable article in canisters. Tobacco was shown growing vigorously in pots, and also in various stages of preparation, up to finished cakes and cigars, made at Ashburton. Several fine samples of linseed were exhibited from Ashburton and other parts of Canterbury, and its application to several useful purposes was well displayed. A good assortment of cordage was shown in native flax and Italian and Russian hemp, and also a large variety of twines of native flax, locally-grown linseed, and other materials. A manufacturer of twine for binding corn and of cordage stated that he preferred New Zealand-grown linseed to imported hemp, and that he would be glad to take large quantities of it, but that at present it was not to be got. I may say that I have communicated with several farmers on this subject, and that I believe next year a considerable quantity of linseed will be grown, and will be found a very profitable crop.

The exhibits of leather goods were few in number, but good in quality. They included well-tanned basils and blacksmiths' aprons from Tinwald, near Ashburton; splendid dyed wool-mats for carriages, and hearthrugs, from Christchurch; harvesters' and gardeners' gloves, driving gloves and gaiters, very well made and very cheap, from Christchurch; and parchment from Nelson. Woollens and woollen goods from Kaiapoi, Roslyn, and Mosgiel, including flannels, tweeds, broadcloths, hosiery, blankets, shawls, plaids, rugs, &c., were shown in endless variety and of unexceptionable quality.

Hats of all kinds, including a large assortment made from New Zealand rabbit-fur, were shown by a Dunedin maker.

Boots and shoes, machine- and hand-made, from Christchurch and Ashburton, were shown in great variety.

Confectionery and bread and biscuits from Ashburton and Christchurch formed a varied and pleasing exhibit, notably bread made at Ashburton in French and German forms.

Brushware, by an Auckland maker, was displayed in great variety and of excellent quality.

Soap and candles from several places were shown, the wax and paraffine candles from Rakaia appearing to great advantage.

Hops from Nelson were shown side by side with samples from Tasmania and California, and malt, beers, wines from Wanganui, vinegar from Ashburton, honey and beeswax, sauces, and inks from Nelson, and a host of minor productions, all helped to make up an interesting and useful display.

Electrotyping was exhibited and explained by a number of specimens of work done in Christchurch, including medallions, medals, plate, &c., from casts in gold, silver, copper, and nickel, spoons and forks plated, a galvanic battery with plated fittings, and silvered carriage fittings.

Silversmiths' work of fine quality from Christchurch, Ashburton, and Timaru, including a case of ornaments of pawa-shell set in silver, formed an attractive exhibit, and a still more interesting one was a number of handsome clocks made at Ashburton.

A useful industry was represented in the manufacture of a great number of small articles from bone and wood, the workshop of the exhibitor being a constant centre of attraction to visitors, especially the younger ones, to whom he duly expatiated on the advantages of turning their hand to profitable occupations. He informed me that, with a small outlay for tools, boys could easily earn a living at this trade in their leisure time.

Printing in all its branches was exemplified by excellent specimens of workmanship from Christchurch, Ashburton, and Timaru.

A multitude of beautiful and useful articles of needlework, woolwork, leatherwork, embroidery, and other female handiwork assisted to vary and adorn the exhibition.

In these notes I have mainly given attention to those exhibits which were of exclusively local production, or connected in some way with local industries. My report would, however, be incomplete were I to say nothing about the large collection of interesting and instructive objects which, in my opinion, rendered the exhibition a most valuable educating agent, by converting a great part of it into a museum. These included paintings and drawings by various artists, some of them being fine works of art, photographs, old books, comprising some specimens of black letter and old English; natural curiosities in great variety, a good collection of coins, antiquities of remarkable interest, a rare collection of Japanese weapons, costumes, and works of art; models of celebrated buildings, ceramic productions of various countries and periods, and numberless other objects. When we consider how few opportunities the people of this colony have of seeing such things, or learning the humanizing and enlightening lessons they teach, it must be admitted, I think, that exhibitions such as that I have described serve a most useful public purpose, apart from that of advancing the commercial industry of the inhabitants.

Before concluding my report, I desire to acknowledge in the warmest terms the ready assistance and untiring attention which I met with from the members of the Exhibition Committee, and particularly from the Secretary, Mr. Poyntz.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

EDWARD WAKEFIELD.

No. 4.

The Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY to Mr. E. WAKEFIELD, M.H.R.

SIR,—

Colonial Secretary's Office, Wellington, 19th April, 1881

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the interesting and exhaustive report which you have furnished upon the Industrial Exhibition recently held at Ashburton, and to convey to you the sincere thanks of the Government for the trouble you have taken, and the service you have rendered them in this matter.

E. Wakefield, Esq., M.H.R., Timaru.

I have, &c.,

THOMAS DICK.

