

22. Whence is it obtained?—India.
23. Do the original growers put it into the form in which it appears as coir?—The Indians or Hindoos do that. Only during the last three or four years have they started manufacturing the article in their gaols.
24. They did not do that formerly?—No; it is an innovation.
25. Do you get the raw article in free of duty?—Yes.
26. Through what channel do these gaol-products come—they do not appear to come through the English importers?—Local agents buy them up, and colonial agents then take them and distribute them through the colonies. The local agents are in Calcutta and Malabar, and there are also the large gaols which supply the local agents, who ship them to the agents in the various parts. There is a man calling himself a manufacturers' agent travelling around now, and it is said he is a prison agent.
27. Have you any proof of that?—Yes; I have letters to that effect.
28. That this manufacture is going on in the gaols in a systematic way?—Yes.
29. *The Chairman.*] This letter is addressed to yourself?—From A. Forsyth and Co., Sydney. I tried to get the mats direct from the gaol, but I was referred to the local agents.
30. *Mr. Hutchison.*] Then, the English manufacturers will labour under the same grievance as yourself?—Yes; they are nearly almost shut out now.
31. Have they made any representations to the British Government on the subject?—I do not know.
32. Is very much matting sold?—Yes.
33. As against the English product?—No. The imports from England are dying out. India has taken the trade in the colonies, and is shutting them out.
34. Do these articles come direct to the colonies from India?—Direct to Sydney.
35. None to Melbourne?—I do not think any go to Melbourne. One firm (James Miller and Co.) employs two or three hundred hands in making matting in Melbourne. Last time I was over there two hundred hands were employed in Melbourne alone.
36. *The Chairman.*] This coir matting is what is commonly known as cocconut matting?—Yes, and mats.
37. Those are the mats we see out of doors?—Yes; that is a gaol-made mat at the front door here.
38. The Commission understand you to say that this importation from India of mats manufactured in prison is practically excluding importation from the manufactories in London?—Yes, I can guarantee that.
39. And also from Melbourne?—Melbourne cannot manufacture to export; only for local trade. They have a duty of 25 per cent.
40. *Mr. Stevens.*] Do you not also manufacture mats from jute?—No; there is no stability in it. It was started many years ago, before coir came into use.
41. Are these mats imported into New Zealand?—No, only little fancy ones.
42. What amount of duty do you think would be reasonable to place upon these coir mats in order to give you an opportunity of competing with this other article?—Twenty-five per cent. would greatly curtail the imported article, but it would not entirely prohibit it, because John Duthie, Sargood, Bing Harris, and others say they can buy it at 30 per cent. less than I offer it, and I have to depend much upon the Union Company, who deal with me; otherwise I would have been starved out. They pay me a good price.
43. *Mr. Tanner.*] According to your statement, both in England and the colonies the raw article is brought in free, and has been for many years?—Yes.
44. How long has the trade been established?—It was first started in 1836. In 1842 they started the manufacture of mats, and it grew greatly.
45. Then it is the fact of the Hindoos having adopted the plan of manufacturing the article which has given such a blow to the establishment of the manufacture in the colony, and has practically ruined the English manufacture?—Yes; it is doing that, gradually of course.
46. Do you know to what extent this trade is followed in the colonies?—The consumption is great.
47. I mean the manufacture?—I do not know. A friend of mine in Sydney is doing a little, but he has been engaged in it seventeen years, and cannot get more than a living.
48. Through what channel does the matting reach the colonies from India: by the P. and O.?—By a service between Calcutta and Sydney, and Malabar as well.
49. Do you know any one else who is engaged in this colony in this manufacture?—I am the only one, and established it in the year 1890-91.
50. *The Chairman.*] Do you at present employ any labour?—I can hardly keep one man going.
51. Supposing it were possible to shut out the imported article, what effect would it have? Would it enable you to employ labour?—Yes. I could put on fifty hands at once.
52. Would you be able to undertake the whole of the trade in New Zealand?—I could supply the whole colony.
53. How many persons would you employ, then, to-day if you had command of the trade?—On a fair estimate, I think at least 100 hands could be constantly employed.
54. Is most of the imported article drawn from India?—Yes.
55. *Mr. Tanner.*] You fear no competition from any other quarter?—No; Only gaol manufactures.
56. *The Chairman.*] Do you use in your industry anything else produced in the colony?—Wool.
57. To what extent would that be used?—Wool is used for fancy mats, for bordering.