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EDITORIAL COMMENT.

Patronise Local Industry.

THE cry in regard to local industry is still as it was thirty years ago, when local industry was but little more than a name. "We know nothing about it." Exhibitions in large numbers have replied to that cry. Nevertheless the ignorance continues to be general. In spite of the demonstrations of colonial fabrics of every description, the local consumer continues to find his choice largely confined to imported articles. In the beginning it was freely declared that the colonial product was bad, and in many instances it was bad. But after the inevitable bad results of independent beginnings the local product was raised to great eminence. But the eminence does not seem to have been high enough to overcome the prejudice. What is the remedy for this state of things which implies that colonial manufacturers are inferior in all their ways?

Clearly neither governments nor local governing bodies can go on piling up exhibitions of international, or any other character. While the best minds in the Dominion have been exercising themselves over this problem a practical suggestion has been made which lights up the industrial horizon with a great flash. It is that the various retail houses in the chief centres shall devote a window each during certain periods for a certain number of days to the display of articles of local manufacture. At one stroke the preposterous expense of organised exhibitions is swept aside, with all the heart-burnings incidental. At one stroke local industry is brought to the front in its natural place for all men to see. At one stroke the eminence of the local product is made manifest. At one stroke the fact is made clear that the local manufacturer is not indebted

to the tariff of his country for the excellence of his wares. At one stroke it is proved that the men of the Dominion are turning out goods better than those of any other country, no matter what the advantages enjoyed of manufacture.

There are advantages to be gained from the patriotic move inaugurated but the other day. Most of us believe that the Dominion will carry a population very much larger than it is carrying now. Most of us must therefore also believe that the local market ought to be kept for the local manufacture. Most of us contend, also, that the necessary condition precedent is that the quality of the local manufacture must be at least as good as the quality of the imported article. These are simple questions, direct and decisive. They can be all answered by the expedient hit upon of giving a display of local industry at certain specified times in certain specified places.

Few are aware of the excellence of the work done by the local workman, and fewer know that the machinery in the factories of the Dominion is equal to the most advanced to be found anywhere.

Once convince the average man of the superiority of the local article—a thing easy of demonstration—and the inferiority of the local article's popularity will disappear from the local market. The next step must be a great increase in the demand for the products of local manufacture in the local market. Leagues have been formed before now in the history of the world having for their object the encouragement of local industry by the simple process of local consumption. The next step in the evolution of local industry here ought to be the patronage of the local supply by the local demand. This must follow in the wake of the present policy as surely as day follows night. The goods being proved at least not inferior, the rest ought to be easy.

The Apprentice and His Master.

THE apprentice, it is often felt, has in this Dominion no master. In other words the apprentice is extinct, or very nearly extinct. Hence the general idea is that all the trades to which more apprentices might be appointed than there are now, are doomed to paralysis and eventually extinction. The apprentice system is the natural highway along which manufactures advance to their proper development. But throughout the Dominion at the present moment the cry is that the arrangements for the up-keep of the supply of apprentices is by no means equal to the demand. That this complaint is eminently correct and well founded is beyond the reach of contradiction. Poll the trades, and the answer will be statistically overwhelming.

This means that the youth of this country are debarred from seeking their fortune in the local manufacture of goods. If they want to learn how to make things they will have to go out of their own country to find out the road to the necessary skill.

Arrived at this point, one naturally asks what is the use of making things if they cannot command the market of local demand? The only possible answer is that if this state of things is to continue the sooner the Dominion leaves off trying to become a manufacturing country the better. The only justification for the establishment of manufactures in our midst is the certainty of being able to maintain the supply out of the abundance of local labour. The pioneers who have borne the heat and burden of the day of small things have a right to demand that their sons shall take the lion's share of the profits due to local industry. That is the natural encouragement for the young people to take to manufactures.

If the present system continues, then the prizes of local industry will fall to imported labour possessing the necessary skill. The men of New Zealand have by some blind system of reasoning proved to themselves that the boys of the Dominion are a menace to the men, and therefore have forced legislation on to the Statute Book of a nature entirely to prevent the approach of the Dominion youth to the manufacturing world. Skilled work, and the opportunity of rising in the world by the exercise of skilled work, are now almost entirely beyond the reach of the young men of the Dominion. If we want to keep up our manufactures we shall have to import the workers and the men of learning. As for our own boys, they will have to transfer their energies elsewhere.

Proposals are before the public for importing skilled labour on a large scale. They are mere palliatives. The want of the country is radical reform. We must not only encourage manufacture, but we must make sure of the permanence of the supply of local manufacturers. If we do not, then the sooner we let our population drift into the stream of casual workers, willing in theory to do anything and able in practice to do nothing worth talking about, the better.

THE success of wireless apparatus of comparatively small power in operating over long distances in the Pacific is phenomenal. Recently the transport *Thomas* established communication with the naval station at San Francisco while she was 1400 miles away. On the same voyage she intercepted a message from the naval station at Sitka, 2200 miles distant in a straight line. This is the best performance recorded by the marine wireless. The new small portable wireless apparatus for field use with which the Army Signal Corps is experimenting has given excellent results, communication having been established for a distance of 26 miles overland.