

# Our Industries: Kaiapoi Woollens.

No. XXIX.

## Kaiapoi Woollen Mills.

What, it is often asked, is the secret of the prosperity evidenced by the rapid rebuilding of the Kaiapoi Woollen Manufacturing Co.'s establishment after the big fire? Men saw a disaster—all the work of years apparently gone up in smoke in a few hours. But before they could find time to moralise, they saw another and finer building on a new site—a better building in every way, better looking, and better adapted to the expansive character of the times. When the handsome front was finished, and the various departments were opened to the public and found to be, like the building, in every way better than the old ones that had gone up in smoke, they saw a proof that the Phoenix always rises out of the ashes a better bird than he was when he sank beneath the flames. What, they asked, is the secret of this extraordinary vitality?

The answer is to be found mainly in the Woollen Company's mills at Kaiapoi. The excellence of the goods there manufactured is the secret of the demand for the company's productions, and that demand is the secret of the remarkable recovery of the establishment that perished in the Christchurch big fire. Obviously a few words must be devoted to the mills before any description of the town establishment can be adequately understood.

In this, of course, there is more than meets the eye. It is a question of local industry; and here we have local industry holding its own in the teeth of the world's most strenuous competition. It is fundamentally right that the country which grows the wool ought to beat the world in the manner in which it turns out the woollen manufactured article, at a price at once attractive to the buyer and remunerative to the maker. But the fundamental reasons are never enough of themselves. There must be skill of manufacture up to date; there must be advantages of many sorts: of water supply, of site, of proximity to railways, ports, cities, and markets of all sorts. There must be suitable climatic conditions, and, above all things, there must be financial power to wait through the early period of trial when business is developing. This power of waiting is the fire by which local industry in new countries is tested. All woollen mills have to go through the same, just as all mills and factories engaged in local enterprise devised for the employment of the local population on the work usually done by the outsider who earns wages at the expense of the local man.

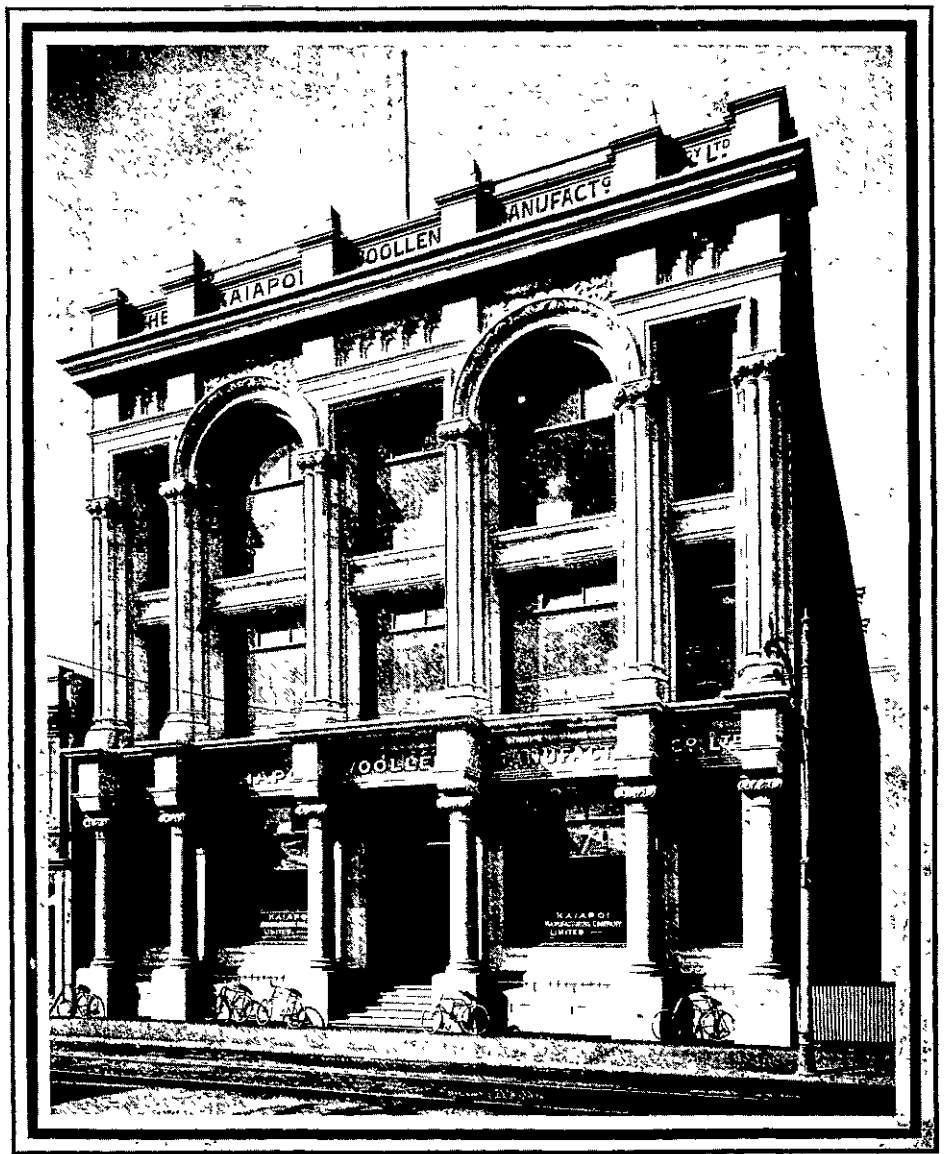
The Kaiapoi mills have no need to remind any one either in Canterbury or any other portion of the Dominion that they went through this test successfully many years ago. The history of the struggle and the triumphs is fresh in the public mind. The picture of the mills which we publish herewith is an eloquent witness of the

triumph won over all the adverse circumstances of the time.

The mills are conveniently situated close to the famous wool growing districts of North Canterbury. They are attractively built on the banks of the little river Cam, an affluent of the Waimakariri river. The water of this stream possesses peculiar chemical properties which have been found to be specially suitable for the purpose of woollen manufacture. That was, in fact, one of the reasons which led to the selec-

These are the secrets of the success of the mills. Visiting manufacturers from Britain and the Continent have no hesitation in giving their testimony emphatically to that effect, every time they go to the mills on the Cam.

To go through these mills is a liberal education in manufacture. The various processes, the carding, the spinning, the weaving, the knitting work and hosiery work, the blanket work, the making of rugs, all the processes and results, in fact,



THE OFFICE FRONT, MANCHESTER STREET, CHRISTCHURCH

tion of the site. Needless to go through the story of what followed the determination to build there.

The mill grounds are ten acres in extent, and the main building occupies a space of 120,000 square feet, and in addition there are a number of smaller detached buildings. Within the last few years the mills have been practically rebuilt; the entire plant has been remodelled, all old machinery "scrapped" and replaced by the very best, swiftest, and most modern woollen manufacturing machinery yet invented.

astound the average visitor by their perfection of treatment and by the simple manner in which they resolve what to the uninitiated appear to be the most abstruse problems. This sort of machinery is to be seen at Bradford, at Roubaix, at a hundred other places in Europe and America. There the view of things whirring and whirling, travelling, and turning, restless ever, is more bewildering, no doubt. But for thoroughness of treatment and delicacy of finish, nothing that is done in any part of the world in a woollen