

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON

Your Committee would suggest that in case the law be altered in the direction last indicated, it would be advantageous that a limited proportion of the penalty inflicted might, at the discretion of the convicting Justice, be given to the informer. Your Committee are not in possession of any sufficient information as to the extent of frauds practised by means of false weights and measures, but they believe that such frauds are common. They have been informed that, particularly in the coal trade, instances of fraud are frequent; and recently, in Hokitika, persons were convicted of selling coals fraudulently, the difference in weight being nearly 4 cwt. per ton. They are led to understand that numerous convictions have taken place in Otago, where the inspection has been placed in the hands of the police, and the general information they have had certainly leads to the assumption that a change in the present system is necessary for the public interest. Your Committee also recommend that all Inspectors should be required to send in annual or half-yearly reports, and that a general report should be laid before the Legislature at the commencement of each session.

Your Committee would also draw attention to the expediency of obtaining permission to introduce into this Colony the "metric" system of weights and measures, as now used in England. They are of opinion that the necessity for such a step becomes the more urgent, seeing the probability of the Colony being brought into closer contact with nations in which that system is used.

Adulteration of Food.

Your Committee have given the best attention which circumstances permitted to this branch of the inquiry submitted to them.

In order to ascertain how far adulteration, either of articles imported and not sold in special packages, or of articles manufactured in the Colony, was practised, they obtained specimens of such articles, from various shops and public-houses in the City of Wellington, which they believed would indicate the general character of such cases throughout the towns of the Colony. The articles thus obtained, such as beer, coffee, sugar, wine, spirits, pepper, &c., were submitted to analysis at the Colonial Laboratory. In the case of the colonial made beers they were all found to be pure, whilst a sample of imported beer, bearing on the bottle the brand of a large and well-known English firm, was found to contain poisonous drugs, namely, *nux vomica* and *coccus indicus*. Your Committee having reason to believe that the brands of many of the larger English brewers have been forged in the Australian Colonies, and not having any means of ascertaining whether the beer in question was manufactured by the firm whose name it bore, have thought it proper to instruct their Chairman to communicate the result of the latter analysis to the firm in question. With two exceptions, the samples of coffee were all more or less adulterated; in two instances so much so as not properly to come under the name of adulterated coffee, but rather of foreign substances slightly adulterated with coffee. The spirits and wines were all more or less adulterated, the former with flavouring oils soluble in spirit, and the latter with colouring matters dissolved in acid. Your Committee do not deem it necessary to offer any fuller details as to the character and extent of the adulterations ascertained, but they feel that the subject is one which demands the attention of the Legislature, and recommend that it should be investigated during the recess, with a view of adopting some preventive measures for the future. They are informed that the spirits and wines sold by retail dealers in out-districts are, as a rule, very bad and produce most pernicious effects. From the Otago diggings, for example, numbers of persons were constantly sent to the Lunatic Asylum at Dunedin, the principal cause of lunacy being the use of adulterated drinks.

In order, however, that any effectual analysis may be made, it will be necessary that the Colonial Laboratory should be supplied with additional apparatus, of which a list is appended to this report.

Your Committee desire to draw special attention to the facilities which the Colonial Laboratory affords for effecting analyses. In England analyses such as those ordinarily undertaken by Dr. Hector are very costly, the average prices being stated in a memorandum attached to this report.

In conclusion, the Committee desire to express their acknowledgments to Dr. Hector for the assistance and valuable suggestions he has given to them upon this branch of the inquiry.

29th July, 1870.

WM. THOS. LOCKE TRAVERS,
Chairman.