

I have for some years past endeavoured to get captains and those trading to the Islands to keep a look-out for any fibrous plant or tree suitable for making brushes; but as yet without success. Few will take the trouble; besides, some knowledge of botany is necessary. I have no doubt that such will ultimately be found, which will make us independent of England for fibre, besides enabling us to export largely an article ever increasing in value.

T. J. H.

Prices paid in Auckland, New Zealand, 1880.

Boring-work, 8d. to 10d. per 1,000 holes; 2s. to 3s. 6d. per gross extra for shaping boards.
 Drawing-work, mostly female labour, 1s. 3d. to 1s. 6d. per 1,000 holes.
 Pan-work, setting bass, 12 holes per penny.
 Pan-work, setting hair, 14 to 17 knots per penny.
 Here females and apprentices have to be taught at a considerable loss, and never sure of keeping them long.

Raw materials have to be bought in larger quantities, and several shipments kept in transit to insure constant supply; causing more capital to be needed to carry on works here.

The British trade combines five or six branches, besides wood-turning and japanning, the whole of which are rarely carried on by makers at Home; but here I am obliged to combine the whole; although not sufficient work to keep, as yet, men going at it continually.

In England the brushmakers are supplied by traders, who work to supply their wants, such as wood of all kinds, also japanned woodwork of all kinds, dressed hairs, &c.

I have now steam-power to do all my own turned work, and nearly all the japanned work, using kauri for nearly all, which answers for most work fairly well.

I employ about thirty hands in all; many of the ordinary factories at Home employ 500.

Few branches of industry form a better opening for labour than the brush trade, labour forming so large an item in the cost. The present tariff does protect and help so far, but not sufficiently, on the common household and ships' brushes, which I make alone, not touching the finer toilet, paint brushes, &c., which are a distinct branch of the trade; and if put at 10 per cent. duty might well allow an extra 5 per cent. on the foregoing cheaper class, making it 20 per cent. tariff in all.

THOS. J. HARBUTT.

No. 51.

Evidence of Mr. THOMAS J. HARBUTT before Messrs. Commissioners Tinne and Burns, at Auckland, 1st May, 1880.

My name is *Thomas J. Harbutt*. I have been about four and a half years in New Zealand, four years of which I have been in the brush trade. Referring to my letter, I can supply any articles to the trade at fair profits according to my price-lists; but the trade are not content with a fair profit, therefore they import the article, and the consumer has to pay the same price for the imported article as for mine. But if a duty was imposed, it would tend to bring the trade to me as a manufacturer, instead of to the importer. Since I have started this industry the price of brushes has been reduced to the public. I am not able to compete with the low-classed article made by what are called in England garret-men—that is, men who do this brush-manufacture at home at their odd time, assisted by their families, and at a very small cost. But I make a first-class article, and my customers inform me that one of my brushes lasts as long as three of the imported brushes. My industry also saves money to the wholesale men, because they are not required to lie so long out of their money on orders, nor yet to keep large stocks. I am quite prepared to take the orders at English prices, with costs and charges added; but my difficulty is to get the importers to give me the orders they send to England; but as yet I cannot succeed with them. I am necessitated to keep a large stock of material, equal to at least 5 per cent. on the article; but, for all that, I am quite willing to submit to that for a time, if I could only secure the orders now sent to England. I have also sent a circular to all my customers, before the tariff was imposed, stating that, if a duty was put upon the imported article, it would not increase my prices. My object is to secure a large trade, and from that source I would make my profit. In getting up a brush I find that about 25 per cent. goes for imported material; 75 per cent. is taken up in material grown in New Zealand and labour. In some articles the proportion of the imported part is only 12½ per cent. As my trade increases, I can get the division of labour further introduced; at present I am obliged to make many articles on my premises that ought to be made outside, as is done in England; this requires more capital to be invested by me here. If the Commissioners could in any way bring under the notice of persons doing business with the Islands the getting of fibre for me, it would be of material benefit to my industry. Fibre suitable for brushware is becoming very scarce in England, and if good fibre could be procured it would be a public benefit, and lead to a large and valuable export trade. I am now making arrangements to start the American corn-broom trade; it would materially assist this industry if farmers and small holders could be induced to grow this plant. I have most successfully grown this broom-corn. It would pay well and be very remunerative to a farmer.

THOMAS J. HARBUTT.