

the trade. Boots manufactured here have been sent Home and *fac similes* made from them, with the object of causing greater competition, the samples being sent Home at the same time they were enabling persons to start manufacturing here. The most successful of the importers' schemes against local manufactures is the importation of boot-uppers from England. About eighteen months ago a firm here imported a very large quantity. They were of a kind for which we got our highest price, and our best hands were engaged producing them. The market was quickly flooded, and a good many clickers, fitters, and machinists lost employment, and the manufacturers were left up to the present time to manufacture inferior lines, which added to the difficulty of the struggle for existence. Again, the members call attention to the fact that the difference in price was not gained by the public; that went to the importers. Had we made them, the profit would have been ours and the public no sufferers. To make these uppers appear colonial-made, they get the soles put upon them here, and the public—who support us in every way they can, or we should not exist at all—are deceived into thinking they are supporting colonial industries. At least 20 per cent. duty is needed upon imported uppers; and when the harm they do the shoe trade is considered, 25 per cent. would not be too much. With regard to the importation of leather, grindery, &c., they leave discussion of what protection is needed upon material dressed here to those interested in that branch. They consider, however, that any material used in the trade that cannot be produced, should be admitted duty-free. In conclusion, they hope this letter will receive consideration, and that your labours may result in gaining protection for our industries. They know that free-trade came as a great boon to the paupers of England; but their idea is that a new country like New Zealand requires protection to prevent the pauperizing of her population. "Prevention is better than cure."

I have, &c.,

A. H. SHELTON,

Hon. Sec. Dunedin Boot-manufacturing Association.

No. 124.

Evidence of a DEPUTATION of BOOT- and SHOE-MAKERS of Wellington, taken before the Commissioners, at Government Buildings, Wellington, 1st June, 1880.

THE deputation handed in a copy of resolutions passed by them at their meetings, as follows:—

"That this meeting is of opinion that the time has arrived for New Zealand to protect her industries. The boot and shoe trade being one, it is the imperative duty of every member of the trade to endeavour to obtain such a tariff as will place them on a par with their foreign competitors."

"That this meeting is of opinion that 40 per cent. *ad valorem* duty should be placed upon all manufactured goods imported, and that a deputation, consisting of Messrs. Smith, Ashton, Edwards, &c., wait upon the Local Industries Commission."

Mr. Ashton states: I am an employer of labour in this trade. I find that German and Austrian boots are imported at prices far below what it is possible for us to make them. These goods are ladies' and gentlemen's best boots. The leather for these boots, except the sole-leather, cannot be manufactured in the colony. The boots we have been making hitherto have been men's and women's strong boots. These we can make to compete with the imported article; most of the leather for these boots is made in the colony. It requires more skill to make a fine boot than a strong one. In this country we have to pay at least 100 per cent. higher wages than in England. In order to enable the trade to successfully make these fine boots, it is necessary that the consumer should pay a very much higher price for the colonial-made article—that is, supposing the 40-per-cent. duty was imposed. We should like the items of boot and shoe vamps, now charged 15 per cent. duty, to be reduced to something like 1d. per pound. If I can keep the men steady at work they can make 55s. per week; but at present the men do not average more than four days per week—one week busy, the next nothing to do. The importers can bring in goods from Melbourne and Sydney at lower rates than we can make them; but when they are out of goods they send to us to make them, so that for the time we are busy. We have always been at the mercy of the importer: what they can get made in Melbourne or Sydney at 1s. 4d., we have to pay 2s. 4d. for here. The wages there are at least one-third lower than here. I keep twenty-five hands, and have the latest improved machinery. I employ a few apprentices; they serve some four or five years. We employ a few women, and use as much colonial-made leather as possible. The bootmakers in Melbourne earn about 30s. to 40s. per week on piece-work. The men here would not work for 50s. per week, even if guaranteed constant employment. We have the labour here for making a certain class of ladies' boots, but not for the finer class. Light boots will not pay to make, even with machinery and 60 per cent. duty. When my men are out of work, they take a job where they can get it, even at labouring work; this, of course, has a tendency to reduce the price of labourers' wages. The men, as a rule, are very steady, well-behaved men. We do not think it is right that Melbourne boots should be introduced to reduce the price of our boots.

My name is *William Smith*. I am a representative of the working boot-trade of the bespoke line, or boots made to order. I have been four years in this colony. I have had constant work. My wages average £2 per week at piece-work, averaging nine hours per day. I am able to make all kinds of boots and shoes; therefore I am in constant work. Many men who can only do certain branches may not be able to get constant employment. I am a journeyman shoemaker, and work for a man who keeps a retail shop and is also an importer. If the trade could obtain a tariff of 40 per cent., they would be willing to accept a reduction of 20 per cent. in wages; but this would have the effect of increasing the articles made in the colony 20 per cent. to the consumer. I am not fully acquainted with the details of factory-work. There are, of course, differences in men's earnings. A skilled man, or a more industrious man, will earn higher wages.

My name is *John William Leahy*. I was born in New Zealand. I am an importer and manufacturer of boots and shoes. I have an objection to the present low tariff, because the money leaves the country. We cannot compete in many articles in consequence of this low tariff. The cost of materials and labour in making up a pair of boots is about one-half for labour and one-half for materials in the