

I made my annual inspection of the factories and workrooms in the smaller towns in Canterbury, and found things in a fairly good condition. I suggested certain sanitary improvements, which, I am informed by the local Inspectors, have been carried out.

This year 851 factories have been registered in this district, in which 9,833 hands are employed—namely, 6,517 males and 2,834 females. These figures do not include the Government Workshops, which employ 482 males.

Permits to work overtime were given to 2,066 persons, who worked 59,429 hours on ordinary days, and 1,129 hours on Saturday afternoons.

Three hundred and twelve certificates have been issued to young persons under sixteen years of age—namely, 146 boys and 166 girls.

Thirty-nine accidents have been reported during the year. The most serious was that of a man employed at grinding bucket-lugs on an emery-wheel, when the wheel flew to pieces, breaking his left arm below the elbow, and nearly severing the hand at the wrist. Several others have lost fingers and parts of fingers at surface planes and by getting entangled in machinery. The other accidents have only been slight.

There have only been two prosecutions under this Act.

SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT.

The owner of the only shearing-shed in my district has erected new and suitable sleeping accommodation for the shearers, in compliance with the provisions of the Act.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACTS.

It is satisfactory to know that the Government purpose presenting to Parliament a more workable Act during the coming session. The present Acts are most difficult to administer, the exempted shops where the shopkeeper can choose his own day for closing being scattered over such a large area, as is the case in cities and suburban districts, that it is utterly impossible for an Inspector to keep a strict supervision over such shops. There were ten convictions under this Act.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

This Act is comparatively easy to administer where due care is exercised in issuing licenses. I have not had a single *bonâ fide* complaint of misconduct on the part of holders of licenses during the year. Three new licenses have been issued and fifteen renewed.

I have, &c.,

JOHN LOMAS, Inspector of Factories.

E. Tregear, Esq., Chief Inspector of Factories.

DUNEDIN.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Dunedin, 31st March, 1901.

I have the honour to submit report for the year ending 31st March, 1901.

LABOUR.

The past twelve months have been marked as a period which has probably never been excelled so far as general prosperity and volume of trade are concerned. On all sides it is said that business was never better, and the chief difficulty with most of the commercial people is, how they are to overtake the demands made on their resources. This wholesome state of affairs is most pronounced in the clothing-factory trade, manufacturers alleging that labour for this class of work is almost unprocurable, and this fact accounts for the large increase in overtime worked during the year. The different branches of the building trade have also been kept very busy; but, although numerous dwellings are being constructed on all sides, the demand for houses, seemingly, cannot be supplied.

There has been a falling-off in the construction of machinery for the dredging industry, which has decidedly lessened the abnormal activity prevalent in the iron industries during the preceding year. The trade, however, is even now considerably above its normal level, and several engineering shops and foundries still find it necessary to continue the night-shifts. Other trades, such as dressmaking, tailoring, hosiery, and woollen-milling, are also kept busy; but I again regret to state that there is no improvement in the boot trade. This industry has been gradually falling-off for some time past, and the curious feature is presented that, while population is largely increasing, the production of footwear in the colony is slowly and surely declining.

Generally speaking, the condition of the workers is fairly good; but, along with the general prosperity comes the seemingly inevitable advance in the cost of living, which is considered altogether out of proportion to any increase in their wages. The unprecedented increase of house-rent is giving the workers most concern. This has been raised from 10 per cent. up to as much as 50 per cent., and, with the present demand for dwellings, may be increased still further.

The unskilled workers have been fairly well employed, but during the last two months numerous applications have been made for employment on public works. The majority of those seeking work have been placed on the Otago Central Railway work, which is now giving remunerative employment to between 500 and 600 men. During the year 519 men, having 1,079 persons depending upon them, passed through this office, and were placed at work.

FACTORIES.

There still continues to be an increase in the number of registered factories and the persons employed. Last year there were 592 registered, as against 614 for the present year, while the number of persons employed has increased by 927, making a total for this year of 9,521, and the number for 1900 was 8,594.