

clothing and food-producing industries, and premises and machinery for the manufacturing of felt hats are also well under way: this will in the near future be a very important industry, employing a large number of hands.

During the past year the number of factories has been increased by 16—630 factories now being registered, as compared with 614 last year. The number of persons employed is almost stationary, the small increase consisting of 56 only, with a gross total of 9,577 employees, as against 9,521 for previous year. Working-permits have been issued to 443 young persons—viz., 203 boys and 240 girls.

The quantity of overtime worked still continues on the increase, the total hours for the past year being 82,813 hours, worked by 2,717 persons, which is almost double that of the year 1900, and about one-fourth in excess of 1901. This large increase, however, is to some extent accounted for by the method created by the Act of 1901, whereby a record of overtime not only of women and young persons, but for male adults as well, has to be supplied to the Department, and it is the overtime worked by the male adult that has augmented the quantity of the overtime to the above figures.

During the year 40 accidents were reported. Fortunately none of them resulted fatally; but 8 of them were somewhat severe in their nature, the most serious necessitating a young woman having an arm amputated through being mutilated in a mat-heating machine. Investigation into these accidents showed they were invariably the outcome of pure misadventure attached to the risks incidental to machinery.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACTS.

So far as I can gather, there seems to be a general desire on the part of both the shopkeepers and their employees to have a definite and universal hour adopted for closing their premises in the evenings. At present there are no restrictions in this respect, only where arbitration has intervened and regulated the hours of employees. In the instances where this has not been done there is really no uniformity, and this fact is creating a deal of dissatisfaction amongst shopkeepers.

From recent experiences it has come under my notice that the services of female clerks, typists, &c., are being largely availed of in the offices of merchants and commercial people. Where factories and shops are concerned ample provision for the necessary conveniences for both sexes is provided by statute, but where offices are concerned there is no such provision made. To surmount this difficulty—which is a fast-growing one—it will be necessary to enforce the provisions of “The Public Health Act, 1900,” and “The Municipal Corporations Act, 1900.”

In former reports I have drawn attention to the friction that exists owing to the exemption contained in the 1895 Amendment Act, leaving it optional to certain shopkeepers to choose any day in the week as the closing-day. Great difficulty is experienced in efficiently administering its provisions, and the bulk of the shopkeepers in this district prefer that the exemption should be done away with, and all the shops be compelled to observe the closing-day fixed by the local authorities.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES.

There are now 16 of these offices in Dunedin, 2 of which have been granted certificates this year, and the rest are renewals. One prosecution was instituted for a breach of the law, charging fees in excess of that provided for by statute, the defendant being convicted and fined. Beyond this instance there have been no complaints, and the law is well observed.

LABOUR.

Generally speaking, unskilled employment has been fairly plentiful during the year, and until quite recently nothing above the normal number of applicants have registered for employment. The usual reduction on the co-operative works in December last, whereby the services of a large number of men were dispensed with from the Otago Central Railway and other public works, has naturally caused a big influx into the city, and a number of these were certainly necessitous cases. The resumption of these works, however, has practically absorbed most of the pressing cases.

During the year 401 persons, with 835 dependants, have been found employment, 352 on Government works, while 49 have secured places under private employment.

There has been a decided falling-off in the activity which prevailed during the preceding two years. This is most noticeable in the engineering and iron trades, and it is doubtless accounted for by the fact that orders for dredges and dredging material are not now so plentiful as formerly, most of the requirements in this respect being completed. The condition of those trades, however, is still at its normal standard, and they are in a far better position than that obtaining prior to the dredging boom.

The building trade has maintained a fairly good position, and the prospects for the coming year also look promising, the demand for buildings still being good. The same remarks also apply to the textile and clothing trades.

On the whole, trade during the year has been fairly good, and manufacturers and tradesmen have had a prosperous season.

I have, &c.,

H. MAXWELL,

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

Inspector of Factories.

RUSSELL.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Russell, 31st March, 1902.

I have the honour to submit for your information my annual report upon the working of the Factories Act in this district for the year ending the 31st March, 1902. It is pleasing to state that the Act has been respected by those concerned; hence no complaints and no prosecutions.