

been constant. The furniture trades have also been good. Employment has been steady throughout, and there has been a demand for competent tradesmen.

The textile trades have also been quite up to the standard. At no period of the year has there been any unemployment in these trades, and during the busy periods prior to Christmas and Easter a considerable amount of overtime had of necessity to be worked.

The engineering trades have been quiet; the business has been very spasmodic, and confined chiefly to repair work.

Printing and bookbinding have experienced a satisfactory year, and no difficulty has been found by employers in keeping regular hands fully employed.

MEN'S EMPLOYMENT BRANCH.

The number of men calling for employment throughout the year has been comparatively small. During the earlier part of the period no difficulty was found in assisting all applicants to employment, and the demands for workers in the country were unsatisfied. There is, however, at the present time a surplus of unskilled workers, and, with the closing of the dairying and freezing seasons, the number of men out of employment is likely to increase. Builders' labourers and milkers were in keen demand, and the number of men offering was not sufficient to meet the demand. During the year 57 men were assisted to private and Government work.

FACTORIES ACT.

As in former years, this Act has worked very smoothly, and is so well understood by employers and employees that there is an entire absence of friction. It has occurred that new factories have been erected, and before registration of the same could be effected alterations in the buildings have been found necessary to comply with the provisions of the Act. In two cases the occupiers were put to considerable expense in carrying out the alterations, which would perhaps have been obviated by first submitting the plans to the Department.

There have been 302 factories registered, employing 1,807 operatives—viz., 1,388 males and 419 females—an increase of 7 factories and 80 workers over the previous year.

Certificates of fitness to work in factories were issued to 51 persons under sixteen years of age—viz., 31 boys and 20 girls.

During the year 26 accidents were reported, but none was of a serious nature. Inquiries were made into the causes; in no case was the accident traceable to negligence or defect in appliances.

During the year 217 women and boys worked 4,037 hours overtime. This is a slight decrease over the previous year.

Only 1 prosecution took place under this Act.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

The number of shops on the register is 326, an increase of 23 over the previous year.

Warrants for overtime were issued to 299 assistants, who worked 3,579 hours, which is a large decrease over the previous year. These warrants have been issued only where it was shown that the work necessitating overtime was of a special nature.

Six cases were taken before the Court for breaches of the Act, as follows: Employing assistants excessive hours, 3; employing assistants on statutory half-holiday, 2; failing to close shop on statutory half-holiday, 1. All the cases were decided in favour of the Department, the penalties inflicted amounting to £5.

Arrears of wages to the amount of £8 ls. 3d. were recovered and paid over to the employees concerned.

Special attention has been given to the seating-accommodation for females. Most of the larger shops where females are employed have, at my request, affixed permanent seats behind the counters for the use of the female assistants.

All shops, including licensed hotels, have been visited during the year, and very few irregularities have been found, conditions, on the whole, being very satisfactory.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT.

There were 126 complaints of breaches of awards received and investigated: 17 cases were dealt with in the Magistrates' Court, and convictions were obtained in 15 cases, while 2 were dismissed. Two cases for breaches of section 58 of the 1908 amendment Act for failing to keep wages and overtime book were also taken to Court, and convictions were obtained in both cases. The total fines amounted to £14. The sum of £23 2s. 9d., arrears of wages, has been recovered and paid over to the workers concerned.

Six under-rate workers' permits under awards have been issued to workmen. In all cases old age or infirmity was the cause of the application.

SHEARERS' AND AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT.

A number of sheds was visited during the shearing season, and in cases where notices had been served during the previous season I found that the requests of the Department had been complied with. Only one complaint was received respecting accommodation. In all cases brought under the notice of the Department there was very little difficulty in getting the necessary accommodation or alterations attended to. The main difficulty was that the sheds were situated in scattered parts and that the time during which inspection can be made is limited.