

operation. Although it is almost impossible to predict whether this hardening of the market is going to be maintained, yet from present indications the prospects certainly point to the likelihood of the present prices ruling for another year. In consequence of the improved appearance of the markets, many flax areas have changed hands. Probably at no other time in the history of the industry has there been such a demand for good flax swamps, at prices which should give satisfaction to the vendors. Owing to this activity in the industry and to the improved prices most of the workers have obtained higher rates of wages than the minimum prescribed by the award. The employment of labour at flax-mills is, however, not continuous for the whole year, and during the winter season several of the mills close down. At the present time this closing-down process has commenced. The 1912-13 flax-milling season has been decidedly successful, most of the mills running overtime or double shifts, and this has been responsible for drawing a large body of workers to the district. Labour throughout the season has been able to cope with the increased production, the supply generally meeting the demand. Owing, however, to that increase a shortage in the supply of ready green is beginning to be felt, and consequently more than the usual number of mills are closing down for the winter months. The shortage of bleaching-grounds will compel the cessation of night shifts, and the same factor will determine the amount of overtime to be worked by the few mills which do not close down. Several mills are already closing down for the season, throwing some hundreds of men on the labour-market. The prospect, therefore, for the worker during the winter months cannot be regarded in a very favourable light. This, however, is but a usual occurrence, and the position is likely to last only until the mills start operations again in a few months' time when, from present appearances, it is anticipated that a successful season is in store for the ensuing summer.

DAIRYING.

This is also an important industry. The season just ended has been, on the whole, a very satisfactory one. The industry has during the past few years grown at a tremendous rate, and, owing to not being able to get experienced men, many of the factories have had to put on inexperienced labour. This applies to both the butter and cheese workers. The past year's transactions show a very large increase in manufacture, thus making the demand for labour very considerable. The prospects for the coming season are for a further increase, and further experienced labour will probably be needed.

Regarding the output of both butter and cheese, this largely exceeds that of the previous year, although prices have not been equal. A large number of the factories which have been making butter in the past have recently turned their attention to cheese, some of them having dual plants, whilst others have actually thrown out butter plants and "gone in" solely for cheese.

One particular branch of the dairying industry that has increased very considerably is glaxo, a dried-milk product. Although there is only one factory working in New Zealand at the present time, the output has gone up by leaps and bounds, and the commodity finds a ready market. The business is being considerably enlarged, and is likely to employ a considerable amount of labour. The prospects for the coming season are bright, and it is hoped that prices will be well maintained.

The rates of wages paid at various factories are laid down by an Arbitration Court award, but several of the factories are paying over the fixed rate.

The accommodation available for workers at the various factories has been well maintained, and many companies have improved the men's accommodation to such an extent as to give them the best of comforts whilst they are off duty.

This industry, like the flax-milling, is a seasonable one, and, with the approach of winter bringing about the usual falling-off in the supply of milk, factories reduce their staffs very materially, so that, while during the season there is a shortage of experienced hands, during the winter months many of these workers are out of employment. Future prospects, however, are good, and further expansion may be expected.

FACTORIES.

The number of factories registered at this office during the year totalled 272—7 more than last year. In these were employed 31 males, ages fourteen to sixteen; 129, seventeen to twenty; and 1,000 over twenty years of age: total, 1,160. Females: 30, fourteen to sixteen; 103, seventeen to twenty; 157 over twenty: total, 290. Grand total, 1,450.

The wages paid amounted to over £93,000.

Certificates of fitness, permitting young people under the age of sixteen to work in factories, have been granted to 24 boys and 31 girls—55 in all.

During the year 4,070 hours overtime has been worked in 25 workrooms by 181 boys and females.

Thirty-two accidents have occurred at 19 factories during the year. None was fatal, and the most serious was the case of the loss of an eye. In no case was the employer to blame in any way. In each case the insurance companies have been at once notified of the accident, and the worker has been made aware of the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act. In only two instances was the Inspector consulted as to a final settlement of claims for compensation, and in both cases a satisfactory settlement was arrived at.

All the factories within the borough are in a clean and satisfactory condition. In three instances the surroundings were not as cleanly as desirable, and in one case the factory was badly ventilated during the summer months, but upon attention being drawn to the matters complained of the occupiers at once effected the necessary alteration, and remedied the defects.