

1917.
NEW ZEALAND.

PATENTS, DESIGNS, AND TRADE-MARKS.

TWENTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE REGISTRAR.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to Section 113 of the Patents, Designs, and Trade-marks Act, 1911.

IN accordance with the provisions of the Patents, Designs, and Trade-marks Act, 1911, I beg to submit my report on the proceedings thereunder during the past year.

The falling-off in the work of the Office caused by the war seems to have about ceased, and while the number of patents applied for last year is slightly lower than in the preceding year, 1,261 as against 1,299, the applications for trade-marks 666 (565) and designs 113 (89) are higher, the total applications for the year being 2,040, as compared with 1,953 in 1915.

The revenue from all sources amounted to £7,107 11s. 3d. (£384 2s. 8d. less than in 1915), the expenditure to £2,835 5s. 1d. (£395 10s. 11d. less than in 1915), leaving a surplus of £4,272 6s. 2d., as compared with £4,260 17s. 11d. in the preceding year.

Whether our patent laws are working satisfactorily or not, however, can only be ascertained by a close investigation of their effect on manufacture, and the number of applications, amount received in fees, &c., is not necessarily a guide in the matter.

The practice of giving wide publicity to the benefits of the Act and freely supplying information, while serving the useful purpose of facilitating applications for patents which may be of value to the public and profitable to the inventor, unfortunately also leads to the patenting of a number of ideas which turn out to be futile and involve their promoters in loss. Even with a new and practicable invention, success is by no means assured. "When the invention has been perfected," to quote the author of a well-known work on the English Patent Practice, "the hardest part of all comes—namely, to cause it to be adopted and worked to the advantage of the inventor. The words of Sir Hugh Platt, in 1589, are as true now as they were when he wrote them: 'I have always found it in mine own experience an easier matter to devise many and profitable inventions than to dispose of one of them to the good of the author.'" More caution should no doubt be exercised by inventors before going to the expense of working out and patenting inventions here or abroad.

The amount of revenue is also to a great extent a question of the adjustment of fees, and conveys little idea of the state of invention. In common with other countries, New Zealand derives a considerable surplus from the working of its Patent Office,* but until all possible steps are taken to promote successful invention it may be questioned whether the amount thus obtained is not at the expense of the country's manufactures and industries.

PROCEEDINGS UNDER THE WAR PROVISIONS.

No applications have yet been made for the grant of licenses under enemy patents, in pursuance of the Act of 1914 on the subject.

One application was made and granted during the year for the suspension of the registration of an enemy trade-mark in favour of the applicants.

Advantage has been freely taken of the provision enabling further time to be obtained for doing any act the performance of which has been delayed owing to circumstances arising from the war.

In accordance with the regulations on the subject of withholding the publication of inventions, arrangements are being made for those relating to arms and munitions of war, or other matters it may be desirable not to disclose, being looked into with the view to the prescribed action being taken with regard to them. This is intended more as a precautionary measure than in anticipation of any number of inventions being conceived of such importance as to render secrecy desirable. In this respect, as in others, the absence of an intimate acquaintance with the recent developments on the subject places New-Zealanders at a disadvantage in bringing their pronounced inventive ability to bear on it.

Throughout this report the figures in parentheses relate to the previous year—i.e., 1915.

* Amounting since 1890 to £80,297 15s. 5d.