

grass-seed and grain harvest. 123 men, with 294 depending upon them, have been assisted through this office during the year—seventy-four being sent to Government works and forty-nine to private employment.

FACTORIES.

There is nothing of a new or specially interesting nature to report as to the working of this Act. Several new and more suitable workrooms have been erected during the year, adding materially to the comfort and health of the employes.

I had some little difficulty in enforcing the provisions of the Employment of Boys or Girls without Payment Prevention Act, but in every case succeeded in getting the employers to pay up from the date the Act came into force. The great weakness of this measure is the absence of any provision for wages to be paid for boys or girls over eighteen years of age. In my opinion it would have been much better had the girls started at a lower rate, say, for the first six months, and provision been made for a gradual increase of wages at stated periods afterwards. If this was done there would be an incentive for the girls to qualify for the higher rates, and it would tend to the employer pushing the girls on. In this way there would have been more openings for the girls who are anxious to learn the dressmaking and the lighter trades.

During the year I have visited nearly all the small townships in Canterbury inspecting the factories and workrooms, and found them in a fairly satisfactory condition. Alterations in sanitary arrangements and increased accommodation in several workrooms have been effected at my suggestion.

This year 873 factories have been registered in this district, in which 8,402 hands are employed—namely, 5,958 males and 2,444 females.

Permits to work overtime were given to 1,525 persons, who worked 41,569 hours on ordinary days; and 218 persons worked 585 hours on Saturday afternoons.

Two hundred and ninety-eight certificates have been issued to young persons under sixteen years of age.

Thirty-five accidents have been reported during the year, none of which have been fatal. The two most severe were that of a youth employed at Messrs. W. Strange and Co.'s cabinet-factory, who lost the last three fingers of his left hand at the second joint at the planing-machine; and that of a young man employed at Messrs. Bowron Brothers' tannery, Woolston, who missed his footing and fell into an empty pit and fractured the base of his skull. The others were more or less slight.

There have been five prosecutions under this Act, and convictions were obtained in every instance.

SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT.

There is only one shearing-shed in my district proper. I visited this station during the shearing season and found the accommodation inadequate for the number of men employed, and I informed the manager that I should require proper and sufficient accommodation to be provided by the next season.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACTS.

These Acts will continue to be difficult to administer until they are simplified and many of the exemptions struck out. It is next to impossible to keep a careful oversight of the hours worked by assistants in exempted shops. The provisions in respect to banks and commercial offices are most unsatisfactory, and almost inoperative.

There were eleven convictions under this Act.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

This Act works most smoothly. Only a few complaints have come under my notice, which upon examination have been found to be misapprehensions as to scale of fees.

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

I have, &c.,
JOHN LOMAS.

DUNEDIN.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Dunedin, 31st March, 1900.

I have the honour to forward my report of the work of this branch of the department for the year ended 31st March, 1900.

FACTORIES.

The total number of factories and workrooms registered in the Dunedin district is 592, as against 562 for the preceding year, being an increase of thirty. This increase is fairly distributed amongst the various industries. Notwithstanding the somewhat small increase in the number of factories registered, the number of people employed therein has been swelled to a very considerable extent. Last year the number of persons employed was 7,256, while during the current year the number has reached 8,218, an advance of nearly one thousand. This is exclusive of those employed in the Government workshop at Hillside, who number approximately 376.

The engineering and iron trades are responsible for 50 per cent. of the increased number of employes, the other portion of the growth being attributable to the general expansion that has been experienced in most of the other industries. While the majority of the manufactories are improving, it is regrettable to state that the bootmaking trade is extremely slack, and the operatives have good reason to complain of the scarcity of work. It is a curious coincidence that a trade whose products are in so much demand should be in such a depressed condition. But, as