

The painting trades were very slack in the early part of the year, but towards the end a decided improvement was shown, which from all accounts is likely to continue.

The engineering trades were also slack, as were the furniture trades, the latter especially so.

On the other hand, bootmaking has been busy, so also have dressmaking, millinery, and tailoring, and in the dressmaking trade a difficulty in getting competent hands has again been experienced.

The various retail trades have shown very little alteration, and have been quite on a par with the previous year.

A general improvement in almost all trades is now being experienced, and employers are a little more hopeful for the future.

FACTORIES ACT.

Little or no difficulty has been experienced in carrying out the provisions of this Act. Employers and workers have long since realised the necessity for compliance with the Act, and a general desire is evidenced by all concerned to see its provisions carried out. Very few offences have been committed, and these have principally been in respect to wages—where, for instance, a mistake had been made as to when increases were due or in respect to payment for holidays. In each case back wages were readily paid up by the employers without reference to the Court. The requirements and comfort of the workers are always considered by employers, and in all new factories—a large number of which have been erected during the year—any suggestions made by the Department's officers are, with very few exceptions, readily carried out.

There were 1,030 factories registered during the year, as against 1,057 for the previous year, a reduction of 27 factories. There were 9,312 persons engaged—6,784 males and 2,528 females—as against 9,198 employed—6,663 males and 2,535 females—for the previous year, an increase of 114 workers.

The total wages paid during the year amounted to £784,177, as against £702,397 for the previous year, an increase of £81,780.

The principal increases in wages paid in the various trades are as follows :—

Trade.						1907-8.	1908-9.	Amount of Increase.
						£	£	£
Bacon-curing	..	..	..	..	..	4,229	6,153	2,124
Bootmaking	..	..	..	..	..	34,127	40,545	3,582
Chemical and drug manufacturing	..	..	..	..	..	2,684	3,550	866
Clothing-manufacturing	..	..	..	..	..	20,467	21,884	1,417
Cycle and motor engineering	..	..	..	..	..	4,219	6,591	2,372
Electrical engineering	..	..	..	..	..	5,446	6,406	940
Gas and coke manufacturing	..	..	..	..	..	23,432	27,360	3,238
Laundry-work	..	..	..	..	..	11,624	14,700	3,103
Meat-slaughtering	..	..	..	..	..	83,428	87,295	3,867
Plumbing	..	..	..	..	..	22,156	25,342	3,386
Printing and bookbinding	..	..	..	..	..	41,761	56,318	14,557
Shipwrighting	..	..	..	..	..	10,303	13,343	3,040
Tailoring	..	..	..	..	..	48,128	55,390	7,262
Tin and sheet-metal working	..	..	..	..	..	7,370	9,209	1,839
Tram, railway car, engine building and repairing	..	..	..	..	..	18,587	22,042	3,455
Watch and jewellery	..	..	..	..	..	7,881	8,658	777
Woollen-milling	..	..	..	..	..	14,675	17,776	3,011

The decrease in the number of factories registered is mainly accounted for by the slackness in the building trades. A number of small builders have had to close their factories, or to so shorten hands that they ceased to be factories within the meaning of the Act. Only 78 builders were registered during the year, as against 85 for the previous year. The total amount of wages paid, however, exceeded the previous year by £1,490. A number of dressmakers also ceased to employ hands, and although this trade has not been slack, yet the small places were compelled to close down, the trade apparently going to the larger firms. Only 77 of these were registered, as against 93 for the previous year. Other trades showing a decrease in the number of factories registered are: Blacksmithing, 4; boot-repairing, 6; cycle and motor repairing, 3; cabinetmaking, 4; laundry-work, 5. Other trades show a slight increase, which brings up the total to within 27 of last year.

Certificates of fitness to young persons to work in factories were issued as follows: 93 boys and 183 girls.

Overtime.—The overtime worked during the year has again been excessive. This has chiefly been worked in the clothing trades, where in many instances a shortage of labour has been experienced. In some cases the full amount of overtime allowed by the Act has been worked. 4,037 persons have worked 150,383 hours—viz., 2,217 males over sixteen have worked 113,797 hours, and 1,820 boys and females have worked 36,586 hours.

Accidents.—There were 87 accidents in factories during the year, none of which, however, were of a very serious nature, and in most cases the machinery where such accidents occurred was not at fault. Care has been taken in all factories where machinery is used to see that it is guarded against accident, and in all cases the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act has been explained to the workers injured.