

GISBORNE.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Gisborne, 6th April, 1909.

I have the honour to submit my report on the work of the Department in the Gisborne district for the year ending 31st March, 1909.

It is very gratifying to be able to report that although during the latter portion of the year under review there has been considerable depression in many trades, still the year has been a good one.

The building trade was very busy during the earlier part of the year, but during the last quarter there was very little doing, with the result that there were many carpenters either idle or working short time. Painters, bricklayers, and plumbers have been fairly well employed throughout.

Freezing industry: There are two large works in the district, and the season has been a most successful one, easily constituting a record for the district. The total output from both works for the six months ended 31st March was 274,714 sheep, 151,765 lambs, and 3,500 cattle: total output, 429,979 carcasses. These figures more than double those of last season, and the works will no doubt be kept going for at least two months more. About 400 men are employed. An improvement has been made at one of the works in the motive power by the installation of a 500 B.H.P. gas-producing plant of the pressure type.

Pastoralists have also had an excellent year in regard to wool returns, as evidenced by the fact that from the 1st July, 1908, to the 31st March, 1909, no less than 42,632 bales of wool and skins have been shipped from the port, as compared with 40,074 bales for the previous year.

Sawmilling: This industry is only in its infancy in the district at the present time, but there are already a number of mills working, and as the railway gets closer to the bush this trade will open out, and should prove a considerable source of wealth to the district, as well as providing employment for a large number of men.

Brickmaking: A new and up-to-date brickworks has been erected during the year, and is capable of turning out from 15,000 to 20,000 bricks per day. As I am informed the clay is of the best, there should be no further necessity to import this article into the district.

Dairying: Dairy-farmers generally have experienced a very successful season, and the supply to the factories and depots has been better maintained than for many seasons previously. This has, of course, been due to the fact that the past season has been an exceptional one for grass. A cheese-factory has been started in the Te Arai district, and, I am informed, has been well supported. This industry should, owing to the adaptability of the district to dairying, develop into one of importance in the near future. The price obtained by farmers for milk has also been better than that obtained last year.

Agricultural: This industry has been gone in for more extensively during the year under review than for any previous year in the history of the district, and I am informed that excellent returns have been obtained in both root and grain crops. During the season, although good wages were offered, harvesters were hard to obtain.

EMPLOYMENT BUREAU.

This branch of the Department has been largely availed of by private employers during the year. 521 persons called in quest of employment, and of this number 107 were placed with private employers and 218 were sent to Government works.

FACTORIES ACT.

This Act has been well observed during the year, although one occupier was fined and several cautioned for minor breaches. The Act is now so well known that breaches are very rare, and these, as a rule, are the result of carelessness. I find that factory-owners are usually ready to carry out any reasonable suggestion. Workrooms are kept clean, but I have had considerable trouble during the year in regard to sanitary matters, more especially privy-accommodation, and in the absence of drainage it has been a difficult matter to suggest improvements. However, as the town has a splendid water-supply, the matter of drainage should receive the early attention of the ratepayers.

Two hundred and thirty-two factories were registered during the year, an increase of 55 on last year, and employing 1,143 male and 191 female operatives; total, 1,334, an increase on last year of 221 males and 7 females; total increase, 228. In this respect also the year has been a successful one, as evidenced by the great amount of overtime worked—viz., 117 females and 2 boys worked 2,635 hours, and 448 males over sixteen years of age worked 58,941 hours; total, 61,576 hours.

Accidents in Factories.—Fifty-nine accidents were reported during the year; the most serious was in the case of an employee at a brickworks, who had his hand so badly crushed while removing a stone from a pug-mill that it had to be amputated. Two persons lost fingers while working planing-machines, and another lost a finger while working a circular saw. The other accidents reported were fortunately not so serious, and may be described as unpreventable. They mostly occurred to slaughtermen engaged at the local freezing-works, who cut themselves while dressing sheep.

Certificates of fitness were issued to 9 males and 10 females under sixteen years of age.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

Returns from 184 shops were collected during the year, employing 246 males and 101 females. Seventy-five males worked 2,256 hours overtime, and 45 females worked 517 hours, an increase of 597 hours on the previous year.

This Act has been well observed during the year, and a caution is usually all that is necessary to insure complete compliance. One shopkeeper was prosecuted for failing to close punctually and employing assistants after hours, and a small fine was inflicted.