

The building trade has been steady during the year. Dairying has been in a flourishing state, and milking-machines are being installed and coming into general use. Milkers have been scarce, although £2 2s. and keep per week were offered. Labourers also have been generally in demand for road-making at 9s., 10s., and 11s. per diem. Harvest hands at 1s. 6d. per hour have been similarly scarce, and bushmen very difficult to obtain.

The district generally has been in a satisfactory state throughout the year. Several large estates have been subdivided into small farms for dairying purposes, and a number of new settlers have arrived, principally from the Middle Island.

#### FEILDING.

There are no public works of any importance going on here, and during the last few months a great number of men have passed through here, wending their way to Auckland and Wellington. During conversations I have had with some of them, I find they have for years past been almost constantly employed on the Main Trunk Railway. It seems almost incredible that these men should have been so improvident as not to have saved something from their earnings; and now when work is scarce many of them are destitute. It has occurred to me that, as married men employed on Government works are required to contribute one-half of their wages to their wives and families, these men should have one-half of their earnings placed to their credit in the Post-Office Savings-Bank, to remain intact until they leave the work on which they are engaged. The characteristic of many of these men who have worked for years on various public works is that they will do no other work.

#### SHANNON.

On the whole, there have been very few men unemployed in this district, although a number of swaggers have passed through. A good handy man who can milk is always in demand by the farmers, who pay fair wages to the right class of man. The sawmills are again working, and have employed a number of men.

Steady business appears to be done in the following trades: drapery and grocery, saddlery, boot-making, cycle-engineering, and butchering. The tailoring trade is slack. The building trade is reviving, as is also brickmaking. Coachbuilding is good, and blacksmiths are always kept busy.

Many of the flax-mills have closed down owing to the low prices now ruling in the trade. An attempt is being made, I believe, to run some of the mills on the contract system at a lower rate than the wages provided for by the award of the Court of Arbitration, and I understand the Department is obtaining the advice of the Court as to whether work can be carried on in this way.

#### FEATHERSTON.

From the farmer's point of view, the past year has been a prosperous one.

The dairying industry especially has been most successful, the milk-supply having exceeded all past years, and the supply, which generally falls off at this time of the year, has kept up. This is accounted for by the abundance of feed brought forward by warm rains. The farmers generally are in a better position this year than last owing to the plentiful supply of feed. The milking-herds are all in good condition, and, with good grass in hand for the next month, the stock should be able to see the winter over with little hand feeding, which will be a great saving to the farmers.

In the building trades all local tradesmen have had a good year; several buildings have been erected, including a new post-office.

Trades generally report good business for the year.

Unskilled labour: All local unskilled labourers have had a good year.

#### BLENHEIM.

For the greater part of the year work has been fairly plentiful, but during the latter part the supply of labour exceeded the demand. Several flax-mills which closed last year owing to the low prices ruling for fibre still remain closed. These mills when working employ a large number of hands.

Skilled agricultural labourers have been eagerly inquired for, and they can always find employment in this district.

Ninety-one persons applied for work during the period, and out of this number 38 were sent to private and other employment.

The building and allied trades have been kept fairly busy during the year, and all hands have been fully employed. The various trades carried on in the district have done well, and business generally has been on a sound basis. Carriage-building, furniture, and sash and door making, cycle and motor repairing, dressmaking, and tailoring trades have all been kept steadily busy during the year.