

## MASTERTON.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Masterton, 21st April, 1913.

I have the honour to submit herewith, for your consideration, the annual report of the working of the Department in the Masterton district for the year ended 31st March, 1913.

## GENERAL.

The period just ended has not been very eventful, and no strike or stoppage of work has occurred in connection with the principal industries carried on throughout this district. The slaughtermen's strike, which occurred during the season at most of the freezing-works throughout the Dominion, did not affect this district, as at the time an agreement had been arrived at between the freezing-company directors and the men, and the arrangements then made were strictly adhered to. The season for meat freezing, preserving, and canning, &c., in this district has proved a record one, the output far exceeding that of the previous year, and, judging from the supply of stock offering, the season will continue for some time. A bacon-factory in connection with the works has caused a considerable amount of extra employment.

The building trade has maintained steady progress throughout the year. The number of permits (50) issued in accordance with the by-laws within the borough shows a slight decrease on last year, and the approximate value of buildings erected has not been so great—viz., £22,000. There has, however, been a very considerable amount of building undertaken throughout the country districts, for which no permits require to be issued, amounting to even more than has been done in the borough, so that work has been plentiful, the demand for good carpenters and joiners on various occasions not being satisfied. Bricklayers, plumbers, and painters have also experienced fairly steady employment.

Brickmaking has experienced rather a slack year, notwithstanding that building operations have been fairly brisk; this is accounted for by the fact that a large quantity of bricks has been obtained from outside the district.

The cement-pipe-manufacturing trade has been very busy, keeping a number of hands steadily employed during the year.

The sawmilling industry has revived somewhat during the year, and one mill which has commenced cutting in a new bush is expected to maintain a considerable output. Local mills are also very busy in cutting white-pine, principally for the boxmaking industry.

Those in the furniture trades have experienced a fairly busy year, and tradesmen obtained much more regular employment than during the previous period. Stock manufacturing and special orders have required special attention, and retailers in the trade report that the turnover has considerably improved.

The motor and cycle trade has developed rapidly, and there is now a large number of operatives employed in connection therewith. New factories have been erected and further additions to others completed. General repairs, alterations, and renovating of cars and cycles, &c., is undertaken in these factories, and good business is reported by dealers.

Coach and carriage building has experienced rather a quieter year, which seems to be accounted for chiefly by the very great increase in motor traffic. Tradesmen throughout have, however, obtained steady employment, but there has not been much further demand.

Engineering firms and agricultural-implement manufacturers report a very busy year, particularly in the latter branch.

The leather trades—saddlery and harness making, also boot and shoe making—have been quieter during the year. A local company endeavoured to start a factory for the manufacture of boots and shoes, &c., but was unsuccessful, and the enterprise has been abandoned.

Clothing trades: Tailoring has experienced a very busy year, and all operatives have obtained practically full time, whilst difficulty was experienced in coping with the orders at certain periods. Dressmaking has also been fairly busy, and a fair amount of overtime has been worked in each of these trades. There has been a fairly regular demand for skilled operatives.

Shearing: During the season shearing was considerably hampered throughout the whole of the district owing to the continued wet weather, consequently shearers did not obtain the usual amount of regular time or tallies, and average earnings at this industry were in consequence much reduced.

Flax-milling: Owing to the increase in the prices offered for fibre this industry revived considerably, and two mills in the district have been cutting and dressing a fair output. This has furnished employment for a regular number of hands throughout the season.

Dairying: An important industry throughout this district is the manufacture of butter and cheese, and the season just closing may be considered almost a record one. The weather experienced did not prove too dry, and there was an abundance of feed; consequently, a very fair supply of milk has been sent to the various factories. This industry employs a large number of workers, and it is usually difficult to obtain enough efficient milkers. This is now being obviated very much owing to the advent of the milking-machine, which is being extensively installed.

Retail trades: From general observation and also from regular reports obtained during the year it must be admitted that general retail business has been rather quiet. Somewhat more than the usual number of stocktaking and periodical sales have, however, been held in connection with most of the principal retail trades, and the results have been reported as fully satisfactory.

## FACORIES ACT.

During the year 140 factories were registered. The number of workers engaged in the factories was 606—viz., 505 males and 101 females—and the wages paid in the various trades amounted to approximately £55,000.