

CUSTOMS AND MARINE DEPARTMENT.

From a trade point of view the financial year just closed has proved the quietest on record for the past seven years. The fact is strongly reflected in the revenue and trade returns for the period. Certainly the estimate of revenue was only £10 short of actual receipts, but the total sum collected was £7,488 less than during the preceding year, whilst the total trade decreased by £90,894.

REVENUE.

The total moneys collected by the Department from all sources during the year amounted to £68,450, as compared with £75,938 for the previous year. The Customs import duties fell short of the estimate by only £552. Copra export duty was short by £1,269, and cocoa export duty by £546. Importations during the earlier quarters of the year gave promise of a larger Customs revenue than usual, but the subsequent falling-off in receipts in the December and March quarters more than justified the reduced estimate for the whole period.

The additional tariff exemptions made in July last were also responsible for a certain loss of revenue. It is estimated that these concessions cost about £1,717 for the nine months. The export duties were affected by unforeseen circumstances such as devastating gales and a dry season.

The shipping fees exceeded the estimate by about £500; taxes, &c., by £900; miscellaneous by £1,200, whilst lease of sheds, lighters, &c., was £300 below the estimate.

The receipts under the principal headings were as follows, the figures for the previous year also being given for the sake of comparison :—

	1922-23.	1923-24.	Decrease.	Increase.
	£	£	£	£
Import duties	45,673	41,948	3,725	..
Export duties—				
Cocoa	1,455	954	501	..
Copra	14,817	10,731	4,086	..
Shipping fees	1,962	2,195	..	233
Lease of export, sheds, lighters, &c.	889	1,029	..	140
Taxes and Native travelling passes	10,125	9,495	630	..
Miscellaneous, including sales of medicinal liquor	1,017	2,098	..	1,081
	75,938	68,450	8,942	1,454
			1,454	
Decreases	7,488	

CUSTOMS.

Statistics.

The statistics dealing with the trade and shipping of the Port of Apia for the calendar year 1923 have already been compiled and published. The total trade for the period amounted to £557,655, as compared with £648,549 for 1922—a decrease of £90,894. The exports exceeded the imports by £19,893.

Imports.

The total value of the imports during 1923 was £268,881, as against £282,939 for the preceding year, a drop of £14,000. No particular line of goods was responsible for the falling-off, but trade was very dull towards the end of the year, and the importations during the December quarter were considerably below the average.

Exports.

The exports for 1923 also showed a decided decline, being valued at £288,774, as compared with £365,610 for 1922—a decrease of £76,836.

Cocoa was responsible for £32,000 of this amount. During the year the export of cacao-beans was only 221 tons, valued at £12,787, compared with 765 tons, valued at £44,513, for the previous year. The market abroad during the year was very weak, and local planters found great difficulty in disposing of their stocks at payable prices. Also, the total production for the year was considerably less than in 1922.

Copra.—The copra export was 13,484 tons, valued at £269,995; for the previous year it totalled 16,956 tons, valued at £319,333. It must, however, be remembered that 1922 was a record year in this respect, and that the average for the two previous years was only 7,400 tons. Moreover, weather conditions last year were unfavourable to a heavy production, the gales of March, 1923, and the subsequent dry weather militating against a large output.

The bulk of the copra continues to go direct to the Continent of Europe, Germany last year receiving 8,377 tons out of the total export of 13,484 tons, and Holland 1,529 tons. But this does not necessarily imply increased trade with the Continent. Much of the copra is purchased by British firms, who have the nut crushed in the mills in Germany and Holland, whilst the oil so expressed is sent to England for manufacture.