

Astronomical observations are made once a week to check the Observatory standard clock. A small radio receiving-set has been installed, in January, to obtain the Honolulu time-signals.

BOARD OF TRADE.

The second year of its existence has proved one of considerable activity on the part of the Samoa Board of Trade. The functions and general policy of the Board were briefly set out in last year's report, and on those lines work has since been carried out, prominence being given to the encouragement of industry.

AGRICULTURAL SHOW AND FAIR.

The first Samoan Agricultural Show and Fair was held on the 2nd and 4th June, 1923, and, considering that this was the first function of the kind promoted in Samoa, it was very successful. Especially was this so in the Industrial Section, where the number of exhibits far exceeded the expectations of the most sanguine.

The show was undoubtedly of great educational value and benefit to the community generally, and, it is hoped, will prove the forerunner of similar and larger displays in future.

COPRA.

There was a steady decline in London values during the first few months of the year under review, the price touching bottom in July, when it stood at £22 15s. per ton. From that date the market gradually recovered, until in January last copra stood at the very satisfactory figure of close upon £30 per ton. Local buying-prices moved in sympathy, reaching as high as 3½ cents per pound in Apia. London values receded somewhat subsequently, and at the end of March the price stood at £27 5s.

With a view to increasing the quantity and quality of the copra produced by the Samoans, a district competition was commenced on the 1st January last. The islands have been divided up into a number of copra districts, and it is proposed to award a cash prize of £50 to the district showing for the year—(a) the largest increase in output, (b) the most marked improvement in quality, (c) the greatest improvement in care of plantations. In addition to the cash prize, shields will be awarded to the best district in Savai'i and the best district in Upolu. These shields will be competed for annually.

As a further aid to increased production, the Samoans are being encouraged to erect small hot-air driers, especially in districts where the weather is more or less uncertain. Competitive designs for a small hot-air drier to be erected at the expense of and for the use of Samoan families were invited. A suitable design was eventually accepted, and a sample drier erected at the Agricultural Farm. This was duly demonstrated, and proved so acceptable that a number are now on order for different parts of the Territory. The drier is a very small, compact affair, with a capacity of about 1,000 lb. weight of green copra.

CACAO.

For the first nine months of the year just closed the outlook for local cacao-growers was most depressing. Not only were the market prices bad and the demand for this product very short indeed, but the crop itself was an exceedingly poor one owing to adverse weather conditions. In January last, however, prices abroad improved appreciably, as did demands. At first inquiries were slow, but eventually demand for supplies poured in from London, San Francisco, Australia, and New Zealand, until the stocks in hand were almost completely disposed of. Further, the new year's crop was an exceedingly good one: the exports for the March quarter, 1924, totalled 296 tons; or 75 tons more than the total export for the preceding twelve months.

MAT AND BASKET MAKING.

The possibilities of finding a market abroad for Native-made mats and baskets is being investigated. It is feared, however, that on account of the comparatively high prices asked by the Natives for their labour, and the irregularity of manufacture and supply, the prospects of success are poor at present.

BALANCE OF TRADE.

The total trade for the calendar year ending 31st December last amounted to £557,655, of which imports contributed £268,881 and exports £288,774. The balance of trade has been well maintained, the exports keeping ahead of the imports, in spite of the excessive importations of 1920-21. The following summary of the figures for the past ten years shows the position:—

	Imports.	Exports.	Total Trade.
	£	£	£
1914	236,239	220,519	456,758
1915	267,091	262,389	529,480
1916	180,340	235,415	415,755
1917	301,173	320,444	621,617
1918	309,396	306,640	616,036
1919	291,368	532,500	823,868
1920	561,153	386,587	947,740
1921	408,892	241,539	650,431
1922	282,939	365,610	648,549
1923	268,881	288,774	557,655
	£3,107,472	£3,160,417	£6,267,889