

REPORTS OF LOCAL INSPECTORS OF FACTORIES AND AGENTS
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR.

AUCKLAND.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Auckland, 5th May, 1894.

I beg to submit, for your information, a report of the departments under my charge during the past year.

LABOUR.

Since date of my last annual report this has been a busy department; and I am sorry to say that, owing to adverse causes, it has not been so bright as could be wished. Owing to what was formerly our staple industry and unfailing outlet for workers—viz., the gumfields—having become so depressed, through a falling market, a large number of unemployed has been thrown out to seek other sources of work.

This, in addition to the steady influx arriving from the Australian Colonies, has kept the supply ahead of the demand. A great majority of these newcomers call at the Bureau, as they consider it the most likely place to get information. With very few exceptions these arrivals are *bonâ fide* working-men, anxious and willing to work, and, as a rule, good samples of men. They appear always thankful for information, and, as far as I can judge, generally acted thereon, especially in the case of those without incumbrance, and whom I directed to likely country districts.

New arrivals with families are, in a good many instances, much to be pitied, a great number of such having come under my notice. Any work that is to be had about the city is picked up by local men; and, as they have generally younger members of their families engaged at factories or elsewhere, and when times were better managed to make a home, these manage to pull along. But with the penniless stranger there is nothing but dire distress; so that if these poor homeless people get a little assistance others should not grumble.

Besides giving what information I could, I have, since my last report, found work for, or directly assisted to the scene of work, 348 persons; these were all absorbed by private employers, with the exception of about a dozen sent to public works.

At the present time there are many and anxious inquirers after work; and, as the Government has intimated the intention of opening up bush- and road-works in this district, I trust we will tide over the winter fairly well, and hope for spring and brightness. At the present we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that a large number of capable and willing workmen are needing employment.

My observation leads me to the belief, and I am thoroughly in accordance with the efforts now being made to settle the workers on land. It is, I am convinced, the only solution of the unemployed difficulty. As a matter of fact, there are far more workers than work. There is no longer any use in saying, "Oh, why don't they save up while in employment, and be prepared for hard times." Well, this is a possibility of the past, as the wages of the present day are, for a man with a family, a bare subsistence, even if he gets constant work. In this district the bushfelling is considered as good a spell of work as any going. At that a man may get some month's work at, say, about £1 5s. per week. Out of this he has to pay rent and keep a family in town, besides, at least, spending a couple of pounds getting there and back; so when the season is over he is just where he started as far as his pocket is concerned. Therefore those who in the present day cry down the labourer for improvidence do not see the true aspect. It is only when a man has his own home that he will be able to save a little, and with that home to improve and live on when out of work, he has a final prospect of being his own master.

FACTORIES.

For this year 261 factories have been registered, employing 4,255 hands. In addition to these, fourteen new places have applied for registration, which will employ about one hundred hands. In connection with this return, I do not think it gives a fair average, especially in the clothing line, as the major portion of these establishments are at this time partially suspended.

During the past year I have made an exhaustive inspection, and where I saw necessity, in sanitary matters or renovating by whitewashing, cleaning, &c., I had such matters attended to.

As far as circumstances will allow, I think the workrooms in this district are fairly up to the requirements. No doubt there are a good many places could stand improving, but, the buildings not having been designed after the modern idea of a factory, it would be a difficult and expensive matter to bring them thoroughly up to the mark. And, as I do not think this altogether a profitable season for owners, it would not be judicious to press for expenditure.

Owing to various unavoidable causes, factories, especially in the clothing line, are at present rather dull, and a good number of employes are not working full time. The principal cause of this is, no doubt, the closing of a large manufacturing establishment and placing in the market a large quantity (about a hundred thousand pounds' worth) of goods, manufactured and otherwise. This, combined with tightness in the money-market, has no doubt somewhat disorganized the legitimate trade of the season. Again, the shops, as a rule, get their goods made up by private sources, and, it is said, at a cost with which the regular factories are unable to compete.

I am pleased to say that my relations with factory-owners on the whole, as a rule, are of the most cordial and pleasing nature, and the provisions of the Act are cheerfully carried out; and when on a visit I am generally met with the remark, "Just tell us what you want." Of course there are