

UNSKILLED LABOUR.

The "unemployed" problem which loomed so largely in Christchurch some years ago is now almost a thing of the past, due not so much to the formation of the Midland and Waipara-Cheviot railway-works as to the increased activity and general prosperity in the district. A great many really industrious workers, who through force of circumstances a few years ago were compelled to seek the aid of this Department, are still in the district, but seldom or ever put in an appearance as applicants for employment, having found other and more remunerative employment. The pinch caused by the temporary stoppage of the Midland and Waipara-Cheviot railway-works was considerably relieved by the somewhat extensive drainage-works being carried out within the city. 261 men, with 445 persons depending upon them, have been assisted through this office during the year—226 having been sent to Government works, and 35 to private employment, while others have been assisted by the agents in the district.

FABRIKES ACT.

The new "Factories Act, 1901," which came into operation on the 8th November last, is in many respects a distinct improvement on the Acts that have preceded it. Its sanitary provisions are much more satisfactory in the interests of health and purer surroundings. With the very substantial aid of the city authorities and the good work done by the medical officer of Health, several very beneficial reforms have been effected already. I desire to acknowledge my personal indebtedness to these officers of the Council and the medical officer for their very valuable assistance in effecting reforms. The provisions as to ventilation, guarding and fencing machinery, and fire-escapes are all improvements in the right direction. The provisions affecting overtime are not as effective as those contained in the Act of 1894, and should be amended so that occupiers would have to apply for permits as formerly. Section 31 is most unsatisfactory, and requires amending. It would have been much better, I think, if this section had stopped at fixing the minimum rate. It is next to impossible, in my opinion, to fix a satisfactory scale of annual increases that will fit all trades.

This year 967 factories have been registered in this district, employing 10,190 hands—namely, 7,243 males and 2,947 females. 2,294 women and young persons under sixteen years of age have worked 65,582½ hours' overtime on ordinary days, and 2,293½ hours on Saturday afternoons; 602 males over sixteen years of age have worked 11,572 hours' overtime.

Five hundred and eighty-six certificates have been issued to young persons under sixteen years of age—namely, 298 males and 288 females.

Eighty-six accidents have been reported during the year, none of which have been fatal, the most serious being that of an employer getting his nose and jaws badly broken by the breaking of an emery wheel while in motion in a wood-turning and cabinetmaking works; the other that of a youth employed in a cycle-engineering shop, who got his coat-sleeve caught in some belting-gear, and had his arm broken in two places. Most of the others were of a slight nature.

There have been nine prosecutions under this Act, all of which were decided in favour of the Department.

SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT.

The only shearing-shed in this district has suitable and satisfactory accommodation.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACTS.

These Acts are just as difficult as ever to administer, and particularly the sections applying to offices; but on the whole I have little or no trouble with the majority of the shopkeepers. There is still the feeling that there ought to be one uniform closing-day for all shops.

There have only been two prosecutions under this Act, both of which were decided in favour of the Department.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

This Act is, on the whole, working well. No complaints of a very serious nature have come to me, except in one instance, where a license-holder was convicted on two charges, and his license indorsed.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACTS.

The Amendment Act of last Parliament has enabled the parties affected by any breach of an award or industrial agreement to appeal to the Inspector to assist in enforcing the same. Several cases have already come under my notice, and in most instances I have been able to effect an amicable settlement without resorting to the Arbitration Court.

In closing, I desire to acknowledge the uniform courtesies received from both employers and employees.

Edward Tregear, Esq., Chief Inspector of Factories.

I have, &c.,
JOHN LOMAS,
Inspector of Factories.

DUNEDIN.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Dunedin, 31st March, 1902.

I have the honour to submit report for period ending the 31st March, 1902.

FABRIKES.

The general condition of the sanitary and other arrangements connected with the factories and workrooms in this district has been well maintained. Efforts made by the Department to improve premises that were somewhat out of date for factory purposes have had the hearty co-operation of the occupiers.

A number of new and commodious factories in accordance with the various requirements of the law have been erected or are in course of construction. These are chiefly in connection with