

works, six men for railway-works, five woolscourers, three grooms, four rabbiters, and twenty lads to work on farms and stations.

Trade in general has been fairly good in nearly all branches, more particularly the building trade.

There has been a bountiful harvest, but I regret to say the prices at present are not at all satisfactory to the growers.

The chief industries here are the Smithfield Freezing- and Fellmongery-works, the South Canterbury Woollen Mills, three flour-mills, and two brick-manufacturing yards, all of which afford employment for a number of people.

E. Tregear, Esq., Wellington.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT CRAWFORD, Inspector of Factories.

OAMARU.

SIR,—

Inspector of Factories' Office, Oamaru, 31st March, 1899.

I have the honour to submit for your information a report upon the working of the Factories Act, the Shops and Shop-assistants Act, and the state of labour in this district during the past year.

FACTORIES.

There were fifty-three factories registered during the year, and they are good buildings, clean, and well ventilated. I have as often as I could visited these buildings, and on all occasions I have found employers willing and anxious to assist me in every way possible; indeed, excepting in the issuing of overtime permits (which were largely used), I have had little or no trouble in carrying out the provisions of the Act. We have had no accidents during the year. I have found employers and employes working smoothly and without the slightest friction. The woollen factory—the principal one in my district—has added to the building during the year. They have also erected new machinery, and everything on the premises is now in good working-order. The dining-room hitherto in use was added to the store- or sample-room, but, on my intimating to the manager that a room must be provided, steps were at once taken to erect a new room. I have pleasure to inform you that I have found the provisions of the Act well carried out during the year.

The following permits were issued to young persons during the year: Tailoring, 3; woollen factory, 1. Standard of education, Sixth Standard. Number of permits refused, nil.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

This Act is now fairly established, and its provisions fairly understood. It has worked well during the year, and gave me little or no trouble. I prosecuted in one case for failing to close on the half-holiday, and a conviction followed, but since then the offender has complied with the law. We have an Early-closing Association here, and the Thursday half-holiday is strictly adhered to. I am glad to be able to report that the Act has worked well during the year, and that all interested seem willing and anxious to carry out its provisions.

LABOUR.

There has been a great number of men from this district sent to co-operative works during the year, and on their return seemed fairly satisfied with their treatment.

I have, &c.,

THOMAS O'GRADY, Inspector of Factories.

The Secretary for Labour, Wellington.

OTAUTAU.

SIR,—

Police-station, Otautau, 31st March, 1899.

I have the honour to report for your information upon the working of the Factories and the Shops and Shop-Assistants Acts and the condition of the labour-market for the year ending the 31st March, 1899.

I am pleased to have to report that the Factories Act has worked very well during the year. I have had no trouble whatever in carrying out its provisions. There has been a slight increase in the number registered—viz., twenty this year, as against seventeen last year—but, as the schedules show, with the exception of the sawmills they are all small.

I visited all the shearing-sheds that come within the Act during the months of November and December last year and January this year, and found the shearers' sleeping-accommodation on the whole satisfactory. The fact of visiting and inspecting these places tends to sharpen up the employers to keep things in decent order. It is a pity that some provision is not made to have more suitable sleeping-accommodation for the men employed at threshing-mills. This work is generally done during the winter months, which is very severe down here, and the sleeping-accommodation in very many instances is not at all of a suitable character.