

The factories have given full employment during the year to 138 persons, being a slight increase since last year.

I received sixty-six applications for overtime permits, which were granted to thirty-two workers, principally type-setters.

No accidents of any kind were reported during the year, and so far as I observed all factory-owners used their best endeavours to comply with the law. A slight misunderstanding has arisen about changing the half-holiday for the benefit of certain classes of workers from Saturday to Thursday, but that is now being attended to by the local authorities, and no doubt will be satisfactorily arranged.

There have been no prosecutions during the year against any of the factory-owners.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES.

There is only one servants' registry office in this district, and it is under good management. No complaints have been received.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

I am able to report that all shopkeepers in this district observe the law. Holidays and closing-hours are well kept, and therefore no cause for interference has arisen.

LABOUR.

The past year has been an unusually good year for unskilled labour. The yields from last year's harvest being good caused a good deal of surplus to be employed. This year's harvest yield is fairly good. The returns coming in from the threshing-mills are reported to be fair yields everywhere, the samples of grain being exceptionally good.

I regret having to report that in some parts of the district the Hessian fly has been very destructive to a considerable area of oat-crop. On some farms the fly damaged the crop to such an extent that there was nothing left to cut.

During the harvest time there was a large influx of unskilled labour, and for a short time the supply of labour was above the demand, but as the harvest season advanced all who were in search of work found employment at good wages.

Tradesmen of all classes have been fully employed during the year, several new buildings having been erected which caused local tradesmen to find employment.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, I am pleased to say that the district as a whole is in a sound and progressive state.

I have, &c.,

JOHN GILLESPIE, Inspector of Factories.

E. Tregear, Esq., Chief Inspector of Factories.

TIMARU.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Timaru, 9th April, 1900.

I have the honour to forward you a report of the departments under my charge for the year ending the 31st March, 1900.

During the year 112 factories have been registered in this district, and thirty-seven permits issued to young persons under sixteen years of age to work in factories. 142 permits to work overtime have been granted.

With regard to the sanitary condition of the factories a good deal of improvement has been effected during the year, but there still remains a good deal to be done.

As a whole the Act is fairly well observed. There have been two prosecutions and convictions recorded, and also a prosecution and conviction under the Employment of Boys or Girls without Payment Prevention Act.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

These Acts work fairly well. I would, however, draw attention to section 12 of the Act, which is evidently intended to give facilities for those honestly requiring extra time for a few days half-yearly or yearly in taking stock. As the section now stands no shopkeeper is limited as to what time he shall take the permits, and consequently the permit may be for one night in each week for forty weeks, and thus be used for an ulterior motive, employes being brought back to the shop to mark goods, or to open up new goods. These permits should be taken twice a year, and for a certain number of consecutive days, which would meet all the requirements for those shopkeepers requiring this extra time for stock-taking alone. I have had long experience in the matter of stock-taking, and I have never known a single instance where a business-man required forty permits, as laid down by the Act.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES.

There are only two license-holders in this district who, as far as I can see or hear, conduct their business in a legitimate manner.

LABOUR.

In reporting on the state of labour in this district I am very pleased to be able to report that the year has been an exceptionally good one. Unskilled labour has been fully employed, and general work has been plentiful.