

Skilled labourers, more especially mechanics, have not been idle one single day—in fact, masters carpenters have informed me that they have experienced some difficulty in getting men.

This has been due in no small measure to the spread of settlement, and as the Pareora Settlement, near St. Andrew's, is just being arranged for, the prospects for the coming year are bright. Important harbour-works are also about to be started, which will afford a lot of employment for skilled and unskilled labourers.

The chief industries in this district are the Timaru Woollen-mills, the Smithfield Freezing and Wool-scouring Works, Clark's wool-works, three flour-mills, and two brick-yards. At one of the brick-yards (Mr. H. B. Kirk's) a complete plant for pipe-making has been erected, and this new industry is likely to be of great importance, as the demand for pipes in view of the settlement promises to be large.

The harvest now finished in this district yielded large crops. I regret to report there were too many harvest labourers this year, the supply far exceeding the demand, and some difficulty was occasioned by men coming here from the North Island and Australia. However, they did not stay long in this district, but wended their way south, in order to seek harvesting in Otago and Southland.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT CRAWFORD, Inspector of Factories.

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

#### OAMARU.

SIR,—

Inspector of Factories Office, Oamaru, 31st March, 1900.

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.

Up to the present there are forty-nine factories and workrooms registered, in good, well ventilated buildings, and with every modern convenience for the comfort of the employes. I have often visited these buildings, and have on all occasions found the rooms well kept, the employers being anxious to carry out any suggestion of mine for the welfare of those employed by them. The woollen-factory, the principal factory in my district, has during the year again added to the building, and now affords very fine accommodation—in fact, one of the finest institutions of its kind in the colony. I have always found the place clean and well kept.

I have pleasure in stating that I have found the provisions of the Act in every instance well observed.

I have issued a good number of overtime permits during the year.

#### SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

This Act has worked well in the district during the past twelve months, and has given me very little trouble. The provisions of the law are now well known to the business people, who show a desire to carry it out.

#### LABOUR.

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I have had, as usual, a good deal of work cast upon me by persons seeking employment and in sending them to co-operative works. I feel I have been fairly successful, and that the wants of labouring-men in the district have been well attended to.

I have, &c.,

THOMAS O'GRADY, Inspector of Factories.

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

#### OTAUTAU.

SIR,—

Police-station, Otautau, 4th April, 1900.

I have the honour to submit to you my annual report for the year ending the 31st March, 1900.

#### FACTORIES.

Twenty-one factories have been registered this year, as against twenty for the year ending the 31st March, 1899. There are eighty persons employed in the factories, and, as the schedules show, most of them are small places, and employ but few hands.

I have had no trouble whatever in carrying out the provisions of the Act, and everything has worked very smoothly.

Owing to pressure of work in my capacity as constable, and the large area of country over which I have to travel, I was unable to visit all the shearing-sheds during shearing time, but in those that I did visit I found the accommodation, except at one small station, satisfactory. The owner of this station I have served with a notice to repair and alter as required by the Act.

As mentioned in my last annual report, it is a pity some provision is not made to have more suitable accommodation provided for the men employed at threshing-mills. This work is generally carried on 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.

#### SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

This Act is very well observed. All the shops close on the Wednesday half-holiday. I have heard of no complaints, and have had no trouble whatever.