

On the 10th March last the Grey River overflowed its banks and flooded a portion of the town, and people in the low-lying parts suffered severe loss. At Blackball the aerial tram used for bringing coal over the river was damaged, and work was stopped in the mine, which threw several out of employment. However, it is expected that work will be resumed shortly.

I have, &c.,

EDWARD STERLING WHITE, Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

AKAROA.

SIR,—

Police-station, Akaroa, 26th April, 1897.

I beg to report for your information that I have had no difficulty in carrying out the provisions of the Factories and other Acts in this sub-district, as all are readily complying with them.

There is no demand for outside labour in this sub-district except during the grass-seed season, when the labour-market is overstocked by persons from other parts of the colony.

I have, &c.,

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

P. SCULLY, Factory Inspector.

METHVEN.

SIR,—

Police-station, Methven, 15th May, 1897.

I respectfully report having registered fourteen places under the Factories Act, which gives satisfaction in the district.

I should like the Shops and Shop-assistants Act made compulsory, so that a half-holiday could be enforced in small townships as well as in the large towns.

I have had no applications for labour since I took charge of this station. The supply is equal to the demand, and everybody in the district seems satisfied with their different prospects.

I have, &c.,

E. Tregear, Esq.

JOHN DILLON, Inspector of Factories.

ASHBURTON.

SIR,—

Ashburton, 3rd May, 1897.

I have the honour to forward you a report on the working of the Factories and Shops and Shop-assistants Acts for the year ending 31st March, 1897. There are sixty-four factories registered here, employing 193 males and 105 females, as against sixty-eight last year, employing 204 males and 101 females.

On the whole, trade has been rather brisk. A number of men have left the district, going to Highbank and other village settlements. The labouring class here depend chiefly on agricultural and pastoral pursuits for their living, and this district is second to none in New Zealand in that respect. Though I may say the grain-crops this year were not so good as was expected, on account of the drought, the price of grain made up for the deficiency. A large number of sheep and lambs have left this district for freezing purposes, and a large number of horses for use in tramways and other purposes.

As to trades, carpenters, blacksmiths, coachbuilders, wheelwrights, tailors, shoemakers, plumbers, painters and paperhangers, bicycle-makers, bricklayers, engineers, and dressmakers and milliners, all are doing fairly well.

Last winter a number of unemployed were found work by the Borough Council, with a subsidy from the Government, at 4s. 6d. per day, and the County Council voted £100 to be spent in contract work—cutting firewood in the plantations; but very little of this money was spent, as the men did not care to leave the town. A number of men were employed on the railway at ballast-work at 6s. per day, which was a great help.

The Acts in this district have been fairly observed, both by employers and employes. No complaints have been made by either side, though I found it necessary to bring two cases before the Court for a breach of the Shops Act, both of which were dismissed. With this exception, the Act, on the whole, has worked very well.

I have, &c.,

E. Tregear, Esq.

EDWARD EADE, Inspector of Factories.

TIMARU.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Timaru, 31st March, 1897.

I beg to report that, during the year ending the 31st March, 1897, the labour-market has not been quite so congested as has been the case for the past three years, yet the supply of unskilled labour frequently exceeded the requirements of the employers; but in no way was it felt in a marked or acute degree.

During the year I found employment for fourteen useful lads with farmers in the South Canterbury district; also for four ploughmen, six harvesters, and twelve general labourers. In addition to the above, in August three men were sent to the Midland Railway at Jackson's; and on the 5th October eight men were sent to the same place. Again, on the 7th January five men were sent road-making at Mount Cook, under the supervision of Mr. Brodrick, District Surveyor.