

## SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

This Act is fairly observed. Although there is no legal half-holiday the shopkeepers have an arrangement to close on Thursday afternoons, which is well observed.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

There have been less tramps in the district during the past year than the preceding one, although a certain number pass every year—not those who require work, but men who prefer leading a Bohemian life, having no care or trouble, and appearing to be quite as happy as the man in regular employment.

The present war in South Africa has withdrawn a number of young men from the labour-market, whose places are now being filled by older men. A large amount of money has been withdrawn from circulation owing to the same cause, which will be felt for a time.

The usual bush-fires have visited the district during the year, a number of houses, fences, grass, and a percentage of stock being destroyed.

Several new creameries have been erected, some by the Dairy Union, others by co-operative associations, and they are proving a source of income to the small settlers, who have not land enough to try sheep-farming.

The district, on the whole, is in a fairly prosperous condition, and is improving as the country is being cleared and grassed. This, of course, is not to be regretted, were it not that the saw-milling industry must cease as soon as the timber is cleared, which will throw a number of men on the labour-market, and withdraw a large amount of ready money from circulation in the district.

I have, &c.,

CHARLES GREY, Inspector of Factories.

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

## MASTERTON.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Masterton, 7th April, 1900.

I have the honour to forward my annual report for the Masterton district for 1899 and 1900.

Seventy-seven factories have been registered for this year, as against eighty-one last year.

With respect to the working of the Factory and other Acts, I find no difficulty in enforcing them, and I think general satisfaction is given, as no complaints are made.

The employés get their half-holiday as well as the shop-assistants, the half-holidays being strictly observed.

With respect to the Employment of Boys or Girls without Payment Prevention Act, passed last year, I went round to the factories and found that no one received less than 5s. per week except milliners and dressmakers, many of them being employed without wages, and others having an average of 2s. 6d. per week. I then served notices on the employers. A few were discharged and paid up to the time the Act came into force, and the wages of those remaining were raised to 4s. per week. I have had one conviction under the Act. There was an agreement for twelve months with a girl to learn the millinery without wages. The employer discharged the girl, stating that she would not pay wages and teach her the trade. She was fined 10s., and ordered to pay arrears since the Act came into force (£1 14s.).

During the past twelve months there have been very few applications from the unemployed, work being fairly plentiful here.

During the winter months I gave, on behalf of the Charitable Aid Board, orders for beds and meals to seventy-two persons who reported themselves hard-up. The class of swaggers who called were principally old men, commonly called "sundowners."

In accordance with the Shearers' Accommodation Act I visited the principal shearing-sheds whilst shearing was on, and no complaints were made. I have already made a special report of my visit in accordance with the Act.

I have, &c.,

JAS. O'MALLEY, Inspector of Factories.

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

## BLENHEIM.

SIR,—

Police-station, Blenheim, 31st March, 1900.

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

During the year sixty-five factories and workrooms were registered, employing 277 males and twenty-six females, as against sixty-nine factories in 1899, employing 273 males and sixteen females. These figures show a slight decrease in the number of factories, but an increase in the number of hands employed.

During the year there was one prosecution under the Shops and Shop-assistants Act, and the shopkeeper was fined.

Good progress has been made on the Blenheim-Awatere railway-works, the men earning fairly good wages and giving satisfaction. These works have given employment to a good many local men. Two accidents happened on the works recently. Two men were using gunpowder for blasting when it unexpectedly exploded, injuring them severely, but not fatally. They were conveyed to the hospital.

Work in the district has been very plentiful; in fact, at times labour was at a premium,