

Several miles of road-formation, metalling, and fencing have been done in this district, which, combined with the Government works, must have absorbed a great deal of labour. The season and wages being good, the labourer must have been fairly well remunerated for his labour. My own observation is that he has done very well, and if he was a little more frugal in his habits he would be in a better position to stand the best of the winter months without seeking work, or at least wait a little until work is forthcoming. Under this heading my monthly schedules will show the number that has passed through my hands employed in the co-operative works, also twenty-five others for whom I was able to get private employment.

Recently I notice a certain class, designating themselves labourers, are flocking into this locality; they belong to what I would term the criminally lazy, and their ambition is to live on the genuine labourer or the settler. My experience is that swagging has a great tendency to produce this class, and I am of the opinion that to retrieve the principles lost by laziness swagging must be stopped, and a certain amount of force used in reviving the best principles of nature in those who have fallen into that habit, which I have no doubt would be a preventive to others from falling into such a state. I also note that the railway freight on firewood is reduced. I think a certain industry by this means, with very little capital, could be brought into operation—that is, by opening up a firewood dépôt in Wellington, a certain number of men to combine and to supply the wood from here and have it retailed out by one of their own class. The settlers, I think, would be only too pleased to give the wood for the taking away, so as to clear the ground. All that would be needed is a couple of drays and horses to cart the wood to the railway-station. A good number of hands are employed just now grass-seed sowing. I am of opinion that very little work such as bushfelling, &c., will be done this season. Sheep and cattle, &c., being so low, the settler tells me there is no money for expenditure. They are obliged themselves to seek work on account of such low prices, which will be the means of casting more into the labour market. The settler deserves every encouragement, and the idea of employing him alternately on the public works and his section will cause labourers to become settlers, and instil on him more frugal habits. I have no suggestions to make.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary, Labour Department, Wellington.

THOS. NESTOR, Agent.

MASTERTON.

SIR,—

Masterton, 31st March, 1895.

I have the honour to forward you a report of the Factories and Shops and Shop-assistants Acts for the year ending the 31st March, 1895.

There are forty-five factories and workrooms registered under the Factories Act in this district up to date, being an increase of sixteen on the number registered last year. The Act has been very fairly observed both by employers and employed, and no complaints have been brought by either side or any person during the year. On each visit I have made during the year I have found no cause for complaint.

In like manner, as regards the working of the Shops and Shop-assistants Act, I may say that the spirit of the Act on the whole has been very fairly observed, and that there has not been any prosecution since the Act came into force.

I have, &c.,

E. Tregear, Esq., Wellington.

HENRY MCARDLE.

WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Wellington, 1st May, 1895.

I beg to report that during the past twelve months 1,892 persons have registered their names at this office as being in search of employment. Of this number, 954 persons were assisted, as follows: 419 were sent to Government works, 170 were sent to private work, 365 were given passes (on guarantee) to places where they stated that they had reasonable prospects of employment, and in many cases they were successful.

It will be seen that there is a large decrease in the number who were passed through this office this year as compared with the year previous, when the total number of persons assisted was 1,300. The month of May shows the largest number assisted. The reason of this was, in my opinion, due to the very large number of men who were attracted to Wellington by the opening of the night-shelters and the relief-works started by the Benevolent Society. Owing to the very low prices ruling for all kinds of produce, farmers, runholders, and others have not been able to employ anything like the number of hands they usually do; but this has not been confined to New Zealand alone, the whole of the colonies have suffered in a like manner, more so even than New Zealand.

There seems to be a general feeling among the men out of work that if they can only get a bit of land all would be well with them. We have hundreds of applications for assistance to reach this end. The Survey Department, under directions from the Hon. the Minister of Lands, has been busily engaged in laying off blocks of land under different systems, so as to enable those with little or no capital to get land and try and make a home for themselves. Many of these men will succeed, as they have all the requisites required to make an ultimate success of their efforts—namely, good physique, determination to overcome initial difficulties, together with a knowledge of country work. Others again are doomed to failure from the start, being what I call feather-bed settlers. I think that that term will sufficiently explain what I mean; but even if there are only 30 per cent. of successes it will be a splendid record, as it simply means that these men are settled for life, and they will not be a recurrent quantity on the labour market of the colony.

It will be seen from the tabulated returns that Wellington is again far ahead of the other large centres in the colony in the number of persons assisted by the department, but this is owing in a great measure to Wellington being the central port of the colony, and also from the fact that a very