

The average wages are for male adults, £1 10s. per week, for female adults £1, for young persons 10s. to 15s. per week. In the dressmaking the employes are principally apprentices, and receive no wages. The whole of the work is done inside the factories, none outside. No complaints have been made by persons employed in the factories, and no legal proceedings have been taken against any employer.

The people engaged in factories and shops appear to be satisfied with the different Acts relating to them, and they observe the laws. The day on which shops are directed to be closed is Wednesday, which day gives general satisfaction.

I have, &c.,

EDWARD STIRLING WHITE, Inspector of Factories.

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

SIR,—

Greymouth, 13th May, 1895.

The number of men assisted during the past year was 307; work on the Grey-Hokitika Railway line mainly absorbed these men. The completion of the railway-station at Hokitika and the erection of the new station at Greymouth have been the principal works put in hand. The station at Kumara and other smaller flag-stations, which required a large amount of filling and levelling, have also been completed. The work still in hand consists of Stationmaster's house at Hokitika and Kumara and the erection of platelayers' cottages along the line.

Of works outside Government control the Coal Creek Railway has kept a large number of men in employment. This work was taken up in small sections on the co-operative system, and may be spoken of as a complement to the system inaugurated by our present Government. The formation is now almost complete up to the mine.

There yet remains the question of transporting the coal across the Grey River, which has not yet, I believe, been definitely settled.

The Brunner and Blackball Coal-mines have not increased their output. The supply appears to be divided between the mines, and this amounts to about 1,000 tons a week less than was contributed by the Brunner Mine alone a short time back. The result is distressing, shown by number of empty houses in the district, the remaining residents earning but a bare subsistence. Brunner pay-day, which, in the past, to the Greymouth tradespeople has always meant a rush of business, is now passed by almost unnoticed.

The timber industry is booming, and should do so. The monthly shipment has averaged about 400,000 superficial feet. The foolish competition among sawmillers has reduced the prices below the minimum of profit. The sawmillers have at last formed an association to prevent this, the ways and means of effecting which have not yet been definitely settled.

The shipment of timber by the "Rangitiki" for the English market has been completed as far as possible at Greymouth. The timber shipped is a fair sample of quality, though that offered had to be condemned. The sawmillers on the coast live in such a hand-to-mouth principle that they would spoil altogether this grand chance of opening up a trade by sending unsound timber unless closely watched by an efficient inspector. The timber trade properly worked would employ a good amount of labour. The gold-mining industry shows signs of revival on the Coast; the Reefton quartz district especially so. Many of the mines which hung fire a long time are again paying dividends, and it is hoped that some of the English capital which is just now flowing into the Thames Goldfields may, ere long, find its way to the Coast. I venture to assert that no other district in the world has been so richly endowed by nature with such natural wealth as the West Coast possesses, three staple products—gold, coal, and timber—all struggling to assert themselves, without the capital necessary for efficient development. The people of Hokitika are at present holding meetings to urge on the Government the desirability of providing water-races in the Rimu district for sluicing the known alluvial ground there. As this would mean the employment of hundreds of people it is a very desirable object from the standpoint of the Labour Bureau.

Advances to mining associations will surely follow the advances to settlers.

I have, &c.,

W. H. BOASE, Agent.

E. Tregear, Esq., Secretary, Department of Labour, Wellington.

CHRISTCHURCH.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Christchurch, 31st March, 1895.

It is difficult to present an abstract of a report to be at once condensed in statement and just to all the important details that come within the range of this branch of the department.

LABOUR.

The term under review has been of unusual dulness and general depression for the whole of the district. The low prices obtained for farming produce, together with bad harvests, have contributed in no small degree to increase the usually large numbers of applicants of the farming class seeking employment this year. This is principally due to the fact that less grain is to be grown now than in former years when better prices prevailed. This has, of course, affected Christchurch very seriously, both industrially and commercially. The small returns of the farming community have not only prevented them from absorbing many of the now unemployed, but must of necessity have reduced the amount of money in circulation. This may be regarded as one of the causes which has led to the languishing condition of many of our local industries.