

Board. Bricklayers, taking the average of the year, have been fairly busy. Their work, however, depends on the number of houses erected, so that some months they may be busy and other months slack. The same applies to plumbers and painters. There is no demand or work for masons.

BLACKSMITHS, ENGINEERS, WHEELWRIGHTS, ETC.

These trades, with the exception of engineers, are constantly employed, horse-shoeing and wagon-repairing being the main dependence. As this is not an agricultural district a very small amount of agricultural machinery is used, and the same applies to agricultural implements. Engineers are not required in this district, there not being sufficient work to keep one employed, as most of the repairs are effected at Masterton or Wellington.

RETAIL TRADE.

The retail trade is not as good as could be wished. The different places of business that come under that name do not appear to be doing as good a trade as they were doing at the same time last year. The money-market being very tight, consumers, as a consequence, are much more careful than in former years, and spend less. Credit in a number of instances has been given for amounts that the debtor could never pay. This is now being stopped, and, as a consequence, there does not appear to be the same amount of business doing. Again, the storekeepers are themselves to blame, in canvassing for orders and delivering the goods to the settlers at their farms, practically doing away with the market-day (Saturday), and thus preventing people from coming into the stores and spending a little money. A number of the sawmills pay monthly, so that credit is given from month to month. I think if the paying of wages weekly were enforced under the Act it would be much better for the grocer, butcher, and baker.

MISCELLANEOUS.

This district has now been gazetted as a county, and will soon come under the Counties Act.

A considerable amount of bushfelling, scrub-cutting, grass-seed cutting, fencing, and grass-sowing has been done in the district during the year. Several road contracts and road-repairing contracts have been completed, and similar works are being gone on with. The usual bush-fires have occurred, but the damage to property this season has been less than last year; two settlers' houses were destroyed—one fully insured and the other with small insurance. The dairying industry is in full swing, and the local dairy is doing a lot of work. The Hamua Dairy is also fully employed; cheese-making, carried on by one settler, is making a good market for itself. Taking the year, I am under the impression that the settler is improving, with trade slack, there being plenty of room for improvement.

LABOUR.

There have been no inquiries for work during the year, as there are no public works in the district. No persons have registered.

There has been no friction with the employers in regard to the various Acts; they appear to be quite willing to do anything that is suggested in a reasonable manner.

I have, &c.,

CHARLES GREY, Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

NELSON.

SIR,—

Police-station, Nelson, 29th March, 1899.

I have the honour to forward you my annual report for the year ending the 31st March, 1899.

FACTORIES.

I have up to date registered 135 factories, employing 573 males and 176 females, as against 137 registered for the whole of last year, employing 523 males and 149 females.

In June last there were two Inspectors of Factories appointed in my district—one at Takaka and another at Collingwood—and, of course, they have registered many factories that I registered last year. I have registered ten new ones this year.

Twenty-six overtime permits were issued to date, as against eighty-nine for the whole of last year. There are few applications for overtime permits at present.

Great improvements have been made in many of the factories as to accommodation for employes during the last months, and they are still going on. Kirkpatrick and Co. have erected a new jam-factory, which employs a number of hands in the fruit season, and the Wakatu boot-factory is another industry lately started.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

I hear of no complaints; everything seems to work smoothly.

BUILDING TRADE.

There has been a great deal of building going on in Nelson for the last twelve months, and very few carpenters are out of work.