

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS.

This Act is working very smoothly. No complaints have been received during the year from employees or others. The half-holiday is strictly observed, even by persons who are exempt. No permits for overtime have been applied for during the year, and no prosecutions have taken place.

LABOUR.

This branch of the Department has had a prosperous year. There have been no applications for assistance from strangers, and local hands have been fully employed. Sawmills, flax-mills, coal-mines, &c., have been busy; also building and engineering trades.

The average rate of wages has been—Carpenters, 12s. per day; blacksmiths and strikers, 9s. to 12s.; bricklayers, 12s.; butchers and bakers, 10s.; engineers, 10s. to 12s.; miners, 10s. to 15s.; painters and plumbers, 10s.; labourers, 7s. to 9s.

With respect to the working of the various Acts, I find no difficulty in enforcing them, as the factory-owners, shopkeepers, and employees now thoroughly understand and appreciate them.

I have, &c.,

R. DARBY,
Inspector of Factories.

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

GREYMOUTH.

SIR,—

Police-station, Greymouth, 19th April, 1902.

In forwarding my report for the yearly period ending the 31st March, 1902, I have much pleasure in stating that in large measure the prosperity of the preceding twelve months has been fully maintained.

FACTORIES ACT.

Of the various factories working in the Greymouth district it may be said that nearly all have been fully employed, and the provisions of the Act have been faithfully observed, and no prosecutions for breaches have been necessary.

THE TIMBER TRADE.

During the year this industry has been very brisk, the trade being an ever increasing and expanding one. During the last decade the yearly export of timber has regularly increased from less than 1,000,000 ft. to an estimated output this year of about 20,000,000 superficial feet. The saw-mills have not increased in number, but by the improvements in machinery and other facilities they are enabled to treat more material.

THE BUILDING TRADE

during the year has been very brisk. Carpenters have been fully employed with building of dredge-pontoons and erection of houses required for the increased population that the dredging industry has brought to the Coast. Bricklayers have been in great demand and command high wages, and plasterers have to be imported from other parts of the colony. Notwithstanding the large advance in the building trade, houses are still scarce, suitable dwellings being still practically unobtainable by new arrivals. Painters, plumbers, paperhangers, and all other branches connected with the building trade have shared in the general prosperity.

THE IRON TRADE

has been very prosperous, a state of affairs also due to the development of the dredging industry, which has beneficially affected every department and branch of West Coast trade and commerce. The local foundry and other ironworking shops have for the most part been working two shifts during the year.

THE FLAX INDUSTRY.

This industry is once more attracting attention, the high price at present ruling making it a profitable article of commerce. Two mills are at present in course of erection, and several others are projected.

THE SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

No complaints have been received during the year, and everything in connection with this Department is working well and smoothly.

GENERAL.

The district is very prosperous so far as the Labour Department is concerned. In the speculative branch of the dredging share-market a heavy slump occurred about the beginning of the yearly period, and has continued almost up to the present, seriously affecting the majority of shareholders in the district. There is every indication, however, that matters are readjusting themselves on a satisfactory basis; several dredging properties show satisfactory returns, and most people are sanguine of better results in the future.

I have, &c.,

PAUL SHIRLEY,
Inspector of Factories.

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