

There were a number of accidents by machinery reported, fortunately none of a fatal nature, and with one exception, where a boy lost his hand, no injuries of a permanent character. I made strict inquiries into all cases, and where I thought necessary consulted the Inspector of Machinery, with a view to obviate further danger.

During the year permits to 750 persons under sixteen years have been granted. In carrying out this clause I would have been pleased if the Act had allowed a little discretion. For example, a boy or girl might apply who wanted, say, a month or two of the statutory age, having left school, and a situation available that would be filled before he or she could get the legal certificate. In the interval the applicant would be idle, and, in cases of boys about the streets, possibly get into trouble or bad habits. Their earnings in the meantime would have been very useful to a widowed mother at home. This and some other slight amendments which I think would be beneficial I would like at some future period to bring under your notice. Trade in nearly all factories appears brisk; I am not in a position to state as to profit and loss. Sweating is averred to be carried on, but, if so, I am of opinion it is not so much by registered factories as from other sources over which there is no restriction.

In concluding, I cannot but express gratitude to all with whom my duties brought me in contact for the kind and cordial manner in which I have always been received, and which consequently tended to make my duties in connection with this department of a very pleasing nature, employers and employed giving me every facility and cheerful assistance. I am now confident that all sections are assured that the Act is working for the benefit of those concerned. I am also indebted greatly to the officers of the public Press for persistent support.

From the officers appointed under the Act by the Board of Health I have received valuable assistance, and find the system of visiting in company with the Board's Inspector to work well.

SHOP AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

On the working of this Act I have little to report, employers and employed, the Inspector, and all concerned are very desirous to see a more complete Bill passed. The weekly half-holiday is, as far as I am aware, granted in a desultory way to all assistants, but is giving satisfaction to none. Upon the Act becoming law, meetings of owners were held, for the purpose of deciding upon closing on a certain day, but through the perverseness of a few this came to nothing, the result being (with the exception of the butchers and the majority of shops in Karangahape Road, which close Wednesday, 1 p.m.) to give the half-holiday any time during the week. It would, I am certain, give very great satisfaction to owners in general if the half-day was fixed so that it would be compulsory for all to close. The shopkeepers residents in Queen Street and centre of the city favour Saturday afternoon, whilst I think a good many of those in Karangahape Road favour Wednesday. All shop-assistants prefer Saturday. My opinion is that a satisfactory result will never be attained until there is in force a shop-closing Bill, so that all, whether employing assistants or not, must close. As it is at present, the person owning the shop can keep it open with himself and family. This, naturally, would cause jealousy and displeasure in those who had to close if employing assistants—indeed, I think there would be found owners who would dispense with assistants for the purpose of keeping open. Taking a summary of opinion, Saturday is the day preferred, and I think no other will give satisfaction. If left to the local Board to fix a day the same dissension would exist in Auckland, as in the city proper it would no doubt be Saturday, whilst the suburbs, under a different Board, would prefer Wednesday. Almost all the drapery firms have factories attached, and, as Saturday is their half-holiday, it would be awkward if the shop closed one day and the factory another.

E. Tregear, Esq., Wellington.

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H. FERGUSON, Inspector.

GISBORNE.

SIR, —

Bureau of Industries, Gisborne, 4th April, 1893.

I have the honour to report that, since the establishment of the Bureau in Gisborne last April, 205 men have been found employment, and a great many of them, both in writing and verbally, have expressed their thanks for the assistance and information rendered through the agency. The bulk of the men have been employed at bushfelling and on roadworks. During the past season there has been great activity and outlay in the clearing of bush-land in order to bring it into profitable occupation, chiefly for pastoral purposes. The extension of settlement has gone on with a remarkable pace, as more general confidence is felt at the prospect of the wool-producing and frozen-meat industries, wool and meat being the staple exports of this district. Remunerative employment has thus been afforded to others besides those who have been provided with work through the Bureau. It is anticipated that a still larger area of bush will be felled during the ensuing season. The prices ruling for bushfelling have varied from £1 2s. to £1 10s. per acre. In addition to the above there has been considerable expenditure by local bodies of moneys obtained under "The Government Loans to Local Bodies Act, 1860," to open up the back country with dray-roads and bridle-tracks. This expenditure must necessarily be diminished as soon as means of communication have been opened up, though it will be some time yet before such a large district is sufficiently roaded. Most of the work has been let by public tender to contractors, as required by the terms of the Counties and Road Boards Acts. The question arises whether in this particular the Acts could not be so amended as to introduce the system of co-operation under efficient control and proper safeguards. Many of the employers now favour the co-operative principle at bushfelling work, as they find the results much more effective and satisfactory where small parties of men of like calibre unite in undertaking the work. "The Contractor and Workmen's Lien Act, 1892," has been fully explained and exemplified. There has been great satisfaction expressed at the general principles of