

men, no matter how ashamed they may be at first to partake of this class of charity, gradually become used to it, and eventually look upon it as a right, and not as a favour. As will be seen from the statistical part of the report, men have been sent to work from Christchurch, Auckland, Dunedin, Oamaru, Timaru, and other parts of the colony, they being in all cases selected by our local agents. In the early part of January, in accordance with instructions, I started men to work on the State farm at Levin. There was a little trouble at first with the Natives, but, happily, this has been settled, and there are now thirty men at work there, and about a dozen of them have their families on the ground, being housed in whares, &c. The work done consists of road-making, fencing, line-cutting, and breaking up ground for an orchard. It is intended to fall a large area of bush this winter, which, when burned off, will be subdivided into paddocks for the purposes of the farm, and a permanent site laid off for the homestead. There is every prospect of it being a success, as the land is good; it is within easy distance of a railway-station, and about fifty miles from Wellington.

FACTORIES.

During the year I have visited, as your deputy, all the principal and a large number of the smaller factory districts, and find that the Act has been working most satisfactorily. There have been a few prosecutions throughout the colony, the details of which you will receive from the local Inspectors. These have been, as a rule, unimportant. I find that, in visiting the factories throughout the colony, employers generally find it to their advantage to provide clean airy workrooms, and many of the factories are, indeed, a pleasure to go through—notably, in Dunedin. There are, to my mind, a few amendments required in the Act such as that relating to piece-workers, education standard, limiting of boys' hours to so many per day instead of so many per week, also lowering the number to constitute a factory—as I cannot see why the employer who only employs, say, two boys should have the power to work them long hours, while his neighbour, who may employ three, has to conform to the law.

The Shop-assistants Act has not been at all a success, it being almost impossible for an Inspector to see that the provisions of the Act are faithfully carried out while the shops are allowed to remain open. Evasions, I am convinced, are many, but difficult to detect.

I have, &c.,

JAMES MACKAY,

Chief Clerk, and Inspector of Factories.

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

SIR,—

Wellington, 31st March, 1894.

I have the honour to report that during the year just ended there has been a steady improvement in the factories and workrooms in this district. Several new buildings have been finished expressly for factory purposes, while others are in the course of erection, and improvements have been effected in twenty-seven old places, chiefly under the sanitary and ventilation clauses of the Act. Considerable difficulty is met with in getting alterations effected in the ventilation of old buildings, more from a want of knowledge of the advantage of ventilation than from a desire to evade the Act.

2. One drawback in this district is the almost entire absence of dining-rooms, and, owing to most of the workrooms being on leasehold property, the leases of which in many cases have almost expired, the difficulty of enforcing the clause is almost insurmountable, as any alteration to the present buildings would have to be of a permanent character, to meet the requirements of the city by-laws. Of course, as new buildings are provided all these requirements will be attended to; but to enforce the proprietors in many factories and workrooms to provide dining-rooms under existing circumstances would be to many of them a very great hardship, and would result in some cases in closing the workroom, and sending the work out into private houses, where we should lose all control over the worker. I may add that the workpeople in small establishments suffer very little inconvenience from the want of dining-rooms, as the majority go to their homes for their noonday-meal.

3. There have been three prosecutions under the Act—namely, section 58. In one case a tailor was charged with having two women employed after 1 p.m. on Saturday afternoon. The defence was that the women being piece-workers they were not retained illegally, as piece-workers were excepted from the operation of clause 58. The Resident Magistrate deferred his decision for a week. He then gave judgment for defendant, without costs, as he considered the Inspector should be protected. The other two cases were against laundry proprietors for breach of section 58, for employing women after 1 p.m. on Saturday. These cases were brought as a test, the defendants not being satisfied that they should be subject to the Factories Act, and wishing to have the Resident Magistrate's decision on the point as to whether laundry-work was a handicraft. One case was argued in Court by counsel on both sides, when the Resident Magistrate gave judgment in our favour, and inflicted a penalty of £1 and costs; the other case was remanded, in consequence of defendant's illness, for fourteen days. When it came on defendant pleaded guilty, and was fined 5s. and costs. There is urgent necessity for the amendment of section 58 so as to include piece-workers without any doubt in the holidays provided in that clause, more particularly the Saturday half-holiday.

During the year 174 permits have been issued to young persons under sixteen years of age to enable them to work in a factory or workroom, in accordance with sections 53 and 54. Care has been taken in every instance to get particulars of birth, certified as correct by Registrar-General, except in cases where children were born out of the colony, when the usual statutory declaration has always been insisted upon. Acting under section 51, permission to work overtime has been granted to 2,470 persons to work 7,392 hours, as follows:—