

are put to those machines, and they often receive injuries not through carelessness, but through ignorance of how to act when a difficulty arises. The law should protect these persons by making the employer liable when an accident happens through an incompetent or inexperienced person being put in charge of a machine.

Legal Decisions.—There were ten cases brought under the Act during the year, and convictions were obtained in each case, with penalties in the aggregate of £20 5s., and costs £12 12s. Two of these cases were due to the vigilance of Miss Scott, Inspector of Factories, who called at a laundry that had obtained a permit to work overtime and found that several women were employed whose names did not appear on the permit. In the other case a tailoring firm obtained a permit to work overtime from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., but kept several women at work till almost 10 p.m., when Miss Scott appeared on the scene. Two cases were brought against a person for paying less than 6d. per hour for overtime: in the first case a £2 conviction was recorded, and in the second case a fine of £2 and £1 8s. costs was imposed.

Shearers' Accommodation.—During the shearing season I visited most of the shearing-sheds in this district that come within the range of section 52. I found them all in a satisfactory condition. During December I visited several large stations in the Wairarapa district from Martinborough to Cape Palliser, thence along the coast to Pahau River, thence to Martinborough, and found the accommodation very good, except in a few cases. Full reports of each case were submitted for your consideration at the time. I cannot say that I consider the present law with regard to this branch of my duties satisfactory, as section 52 is altogether too vague, and to satisfy yourself as to the quality of the accommodation it is necessary to visit each station whilst the work of shearing is in hand. Such an arrangement would occupy the most of a man's time in this district for the greater part of two months, whereas if the Act defined what was required it would only be necessary to make occasional visits at or about shearing time.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

Speaking generally, this Act may be said to be working well. It is well observed by employer and assistant alike, and generally regarded as beneficial to both. Of course, there are persons who will break this or any other law; this is only to be expected while human beings are in business; yet my list of cases for breaches of the Act shows twelve cases, as against nineteen for last year. The falling-off is mainly due to the better conduct of the Chinese storekeepers. The provision made in section 5 of the Act of 1895 no doubt reduces the temptation for small tradesmen to break the law to a minimum, as there are so many shops that take advantage of that clause open on the regular closing-day that there is no use for the plea of urgent necessity, &c. Yet that same provision entails a great deal more work on the Inspector, as now every afternoon is a half-holiday for some shop, which necessitates a ramble over the greater part of the city each night. Yet I think it is a wise provision.

Legal Decisions.—There have been twelve cases brought during the year. In eleven cases convictions were obtained, with an aggregate of £11 penalties and £20 15s. costs, and one case was dismissed without costs. The amendment of last year is now in operation. Circulars have been sent to all bakers and others interested in its provisions, but no breaches have been detected as yet.

Permission to work overtime, as provided by section 12, has been granted to 682 persons to work 1,966 hours.

"Servants' Registry Offices Act, 1895."—This Act appears to be working very well, as it is a very rare thing to hear complaints of extortionate charges, as was the case previously. There is another fact that tends to show the business is not as profitable as it was formerly—that is, the reduction in the number of offices registered under the Act. Last year I had fourteen licensed offices; this year I have only eight, five of which were registered under the old Act, and have continued in the business, and three who have registered during the present year. There has been one conviction obtained, with a penalty of £1 and £1 8s. costs, against a licensee for charging a fee in excess of that allowed by law.

In conclusion, I have to thank all who my duties bring me in contact with for their uniform kindness and courtesy, for, whilst I have had some disagreeable duties to perform, I have performed them, thanks to the good sense of the parties interested, without personal feelings being aroused.

I have, &c.,

JAMES SHANAGHAN, Inspector of Factories.

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

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington.

I have the honour to submit for your consideration a report of the work done by me during the year ending the 31st March, 1897. During that time I inspected factories and work-rooms in the industrial centres of both Islands.

On the occasion of my last visit to Christchurch and Dunedin I was pleased to find instructions given by me for alterations and improvements at various factories had been carefully carried out, much to the comfort and convenience of those employed. In both of these centres most of the workrooms are lofty, well ventilated, and well lighted, with walls and floors clean, and are supplied with proper lavatories, with plenty of water laid on, so that these places can always be fresh and clean. In some establishments the workers seem to have a thorough appreciation of the importance of cleanliness, and make good use of all the advantages offered in this way, while on the other hand there are employers who have to complain of the careless habits of their employes. In fact, it now depends greatly on the character of those employed as to the condition of these places.