

This Act works well, and the owners and occupiers of factories—without one single instance to the contrary—are perfectly willing to assist in its fair administration. Any suggestion I have made at any of the factories for improvement in the comfort provided for employes has been promptly attended to, and I have not received any complaints from employes during the year.

Of the increase of factories (fifteen) I hope there are many of the come-to-stay class—for instance, Stubbs Defiance Packing Company—generally preserving of fruits and tinning them, and the preparing and packing of coffee is also included in this establishment. Month after month this business is steadily increasing; more room will be required, and more hands must necessarily be employed. It is to be hoped the proprietor in this undertaking will be rewarded with success. Mr. Fail's coöperation is also an addition to our factories. Five men are regularly employed, and there is no doubt this business will increase, as a large amount of work is at present being turned out.

The number of dressmaking factories has increased during the year, and in consequence a greater number of females have been employed, and in all cases there is the greatest consideration for the comfort of the girls. In every instance of new factories one cannot expect the rooms to be exactly in compliance with the Act, but owners and occupiers willingly rectify the errors pointed out when given a little time to do so. The tailoring establishments have also increased, and more hands—females especially—have been employed.

There are other factories started during the year I need not mention, but they are busy and appear prosperous, and I hope will steadily improve as they become longer established. I must state that the provisions of the Act are complied with in every way.

THE SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

This Act works well, notwithstanding the fact that great opposition in the different businesses exist, but the requirements of the Act are attended to.

THE BUILDING TRADE.

Carpenters have been very busy during the year, and a great many new buildings have been erected in the borough and immediately about it. Most of the cottages built are of a substantial and comfortable class.

RETAIL TRADES.

These departments have certainly been kept busy during the year, and there are only perhaps two or three empty shops in the main thoroughfare of the town, Heretaunga Road, the business centre, being nearly half a mile long. The shops are neat and clean and well kept, the decorations of the windows being evidently a work of great study to many of the proprietors. The requirements of the Act are well observed.

ENGINEERING AND WHEELWRIGHT.

These trades are certainly on the increase, and the several places of business are always engaged at work. There is no doubt the work is heavy and trying, particularly in the summer months, but generally speaking the men who take to these trades are of the healthy and muscular class.

MISCELLANEOUS.

There have been very few swaggers or loafers seen about this town during the year, and consequently very few complaints have been received by the police of begging or visiting houses about dinner-time on the pretence of looking for work. This happy state of things is mainly due to the support the police have received from the Magistrates—the local Justices—to deal with the class under the vagrant clauses of the Police Offences Act, as they rightly deserve. The police narrowly watch these professional loafers, and when seen they are warned to leave town in search of work; and if they do not leave after receiving a warning they are taken, as provided by the Act, before the Justices, and if they do not satisfy the Justices as to their mode of living being lawful they are dealt with in a manner which prevents them repeating the offence, and which acts as a caution to others. The professional sundowner does not like to be made to work for his food—indeed, at some of the sheep-stations he growls when asked to cut a bit of firewood before or after accommodation.

I am pleased to be able to report from inquiry and general observation that the families and persons who suffered severely by the flood last Easter are again apparently in comfortable and prosperous circumstances, and, indeed, the greatest stranger must come to this conclusion, for at our frequent race-meetings—too frequent—and numerous season holidays all classes may be seen cheerful and well dressed, and by no means short of pocket-money.

There have not been any prosecutions under the labour Acts during the year.

I have, &c.,

F. CHARLES SMITH, Inspector of Factories.

The Chief Inspector of Factories, Wellington.

WAIPAWA.

SIR,—

Factories Office, Waipawa, 10th May, 1898.

I beg to report that trade in general appears to be on a sound footing. There are no complaints from tradespeople nor employes. The tradespeople and workers generally appear well satisfied with their conditions, and there is nothing which calls for particular mention. There are