

reports, or papers relating to the subject-matter of the inquiry held under these presents or any part thereof :

And I do hereby require you, within two calendar months from the date of these presents, or as much sooner as the same can conveniently be done (using all diligence), to certify to me under your hands and seals your several proceedings, and your opinion touching the premises, and stating therein what measures (if any) it would, in your opinion, be desirable to adopt in respect thereof, or of any matter or thing arising out of or connected with the said inquiry :

And, lastly, I do hereby declare that this Commission is and is intended to be issued subject to the provisions of "The Commissioners' Powers Act, 1867," and "The Commissioners' Powers Act Amendment Act, 1872."

Given under the hand of His Excellency the Most Honorable George Augustus Constantine, Marquis of Normanby, Earl of Mulgrave, Viscount Normanby, and Baron Mulgrave of Mulgrave, all in the County of York, in the Peerage of the United Kingdom ; and Baron Mulgrave of New Ross, in the County of Wexford, in the Peerage of Ireland ; a Member of Her Majesty's Most Honorable Privy Council ; Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George ; Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over Her Majesty's Colony of New Zealand and its Dependencies, and Vice-Admiral of the same ; and issued under the Seal of the said Colony, at the Government House at Auckland, this eighteenth day of April, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventy-eight.

J. BALLANCE.

Approved in Council.

IRWIN C. MALING,
Acting Clerk of the Executive Council.

No. 2.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORT.

THE Commissioners appointed by His Excellency the Governor to inquire into the operations of an Act entitled "The Employment of Females Act, 1873," and of the several amendments thereof, have closed their inquiry, and, in returning the Commission with which His Excellency was pleased to honour them, report as follows :—

That the several Acts referred to are necessary, and have mainly accomplished the wise purposes for which they were enacted.

According to the testimony of the adult women, the law has worked a favourable change in the comfort, independence, and well-being of females employed in the Dunedin factories and workshops. Some of the women who have for years been employed in Dunedin expressed their gratitude for the protection which the Legislature had secured for them by the limitation of the hours of labour, and for the consequent improvement in their social condition and physical health.

The investigation shows that women cannot combine together as workmen do in their trades union, to protect themselves and limit the hours of labour. In the case of married women compelled to work in factories for the support of their families, it is especially necessary that the Legislature should step in to do for women what trades union effect for workmen and others.

The Acts, as far as the limitation of labour is concerned, take a middle course between those antagonistic forces termed "meddling legislation" and "freedom of labour," and secures the interests of the public, which are so vitally concerned in the health and social condition of women.

The Commissioners are unanimous in the opinion that an alteration of the Act which would make the limitation a weekly one of fifty-four hours instead of a daily one of eight hours, would certainly defeat the objects of the Legislature.

The investigation shows, however, that the law is not effectively carried out in many cases, owing to the insufficient inspection of the workshops. The Commissioners are unanimous in the opinion that the indifference or repugnance which is sometimes shown to carry out the provisions of the Acts limiting the hours of labour can only be guarded against by a thorough system of inspection. There are no difficulties in the way of securing the non-violation of the law in this particular. Any person having the right of entry into a workshop can, with perfect facility, determine whether children, young persons, and women, are engaged in work beyond the hours fixed by law.

The investigation was extended to the sanitary arrangements of the workshops. It will be seen from the reports of the Inspectors of Nuisances that the conveniences for the work-people require consideration.

Two of the workshops inspected by the Commissioners were well-ventilated, and large in proportion to the number of hands employed. The whole of the arrangements in both were good. No doubt the employers find their advantage in this. It must secure for them the best and most expert women ; and, on the other hand, induces the women, by good conduct, to retain employment where their health, comfort, and respectability are studied.

In another and extensive establishment the foul air, heated by furnaces below, vitiates the atmosphere of the crowded rooms above. The Commissioners would earnestly recommend that, at least, the cubic contents of the workrooms should be proportioned, by law, to the number of persons employed in them ; and that, generally, the sanitary arrangements should be made satisfactory to the Medical Officers of the Boards of Health.

The Commissioners find that the violators of the law have had their offences practically condoned by mere nominal fines. This tends to render the law a dead-letter where the employers choose to set it at defiance. It should be guarded against by making the minimum penalty forty shillings for breach of the provisions of the Act.