

ultimately injure themselves. In some of the older countries goods are now sold bearing the label of the trade-union or the Knights of Labour, thus showing that the articles were manufactured by workpeople to whom fair wages were paid. This is the "reverse of the boycott." Boycotting is perhaps unjust in suggesting "Do not deal with such-and-such persons"; but its reverse says "Deal with this man, because he pays his workers honest wages": this is surely fair enough. A far more practical mode of warfare against "sweating" is the mode legally adopted lately in the State of New York—namely, by causing every garment or article not made in a registered factory to bear a label on which is printed "Tenement made"; a heavy punishment following the removal of the ticket before sale. If, then, any member of the general public wishes to court infection or to assist in "sweating," he or she can purchase such labelled articles.

The Army Clothing Factory in Great Britain has shielded 1,500 people from the sweaters; and if its operations were extended to make clothes for the navy, militia, and volunteers, Customs, Post Office, &c., it would do immense service. Probably it would be well if something of the sort should be established in New Zealand, but if this is considered undesirable there should certainly be substituted the "fair-wages" clause in all public contracts. The British Board of Trade has the following clause in its contracts:—

The contractor undertakes that all garments included in this contract shall be made up in his own factory, and that no work shall be done at the homes of the workpeople. Any infringement of this condition, if proved to the satisfaction of the President of the Board of Trade, shall render the contractor liable to a penalty not exceeding £100 for each offence.

A still more explicit and stringent form of this clause has been adopted by the London County Council. It is as follows:—

The contractors hereby expressly undertake and agree with the Council that all work and labour matters and things whatever under this contract shall be executed, done, and completed by the contractors upon their own premises, in _____; under a penalty of £50, to be recovered by the Council for every breach, as often as the same shall happen, in case of default by the contractors; or the said amount of £50 may in every case be retained by them from any moneys due or which may become due to the contractors from the Council under this or any other contract with the contractors.

If, by legislation, some similar clause in all tenders could be enforced in New Zealand, it would be a great advantage not only to operatives, but to factory-owners and to mercantile men, who, while naturally wishing to benefit themselves, dislike to do so at the cost of workpeople beaten down in the competitive struggle for existence. Another benefit would accrue to the industrial classes if the Government and all local governing bodies (including Municipalities) would insist upon an expert officer naming a price which would be fair to the contractor for his work, and that no tender which was 10 per cent. below or 15 per cent. higher than the price named by the expert should be accepted. This would do away with the principle of "Lowest tender accepted," a system which has done more to ruin struggling men and "sweat" workers into degradation than any other invention of modern barbarism.

TRUCK.

A useful extension of the principle of the Truck Act, which prevents wages being paid in goods or "truck," could be applied to other forms of payment beside that of wages. Those who remember the bondage in which labour was held by contractors and storekeepers supplying goods on unending accounts will comprehend the desirability of others beside wage-earners being delivered from this form of servitude. Kauri-gum diggers, for instance, complain that, once in the power of a storekeeper, they must continue to supply gum to him, and him only, at his price, and take stores from him at any price. In the rural districts, also, farmers, and especially farmers' wives, having once got into debt at a store, never see cash again, as they are compelled to sell their butter, eggs, &c., to the storekeeper, and take his goods in return, the former at under and the latter at over market-rates, the penalty being an action in Court for debt if they deal with any one else. Higher in the social scale this system is also in force, advances being made for grain and produce by wealthy mercantile houses, which, by thus buying and selling at their own rates, milk their cow with both hands. It would be an immense boon to many if the legislation which commands that all wages should be paid in cash regardless of any contra-account should insist that all business transactions should take place in money, without allowing any set-off for goods supplied. Many poor people, not understanding accounts, or not being in a position to demand inspection of accounts, are now unjustly treated: they handle no money from year's end to year's end, and are practically prisoners; while to the storekeeper the system is greatly provocative of dishonesty.

MASTERS AND APPRENTICES.

Some amendment of the present Act appears to be necessary, as it has become out of touch with the times. The provisions of the Act have been framed on lines similar to those of English Acts relating to the enforced apprenticeship of pauper children, and are not applicable to the modern conditions of colonial life. In the skilled trades there is long and bitter complaint as to the eviction of adults from employment in order to make room for the cheaper labour of boys and girls. An evil growing out of this is the insufficient training in their business which these children receive, since they are not apprentices in the strict sense of the word, and they do not receive proper tuition to enable them to become competent operatives. In the plumbing trade, for instance, sometimes a shop employs many boys and only one or two journeymen, with the result that the public suffer great loss through incompetent workmanship. In certain large dressmaking establishments, also, the head dressmaker receives such a disproportionately high salary that her cost to the firm has to be made up by employing bevy of young girls at "sweating" rates. These girls could not keep themselves without parental help; and by working at low wages they injure self-supporting girls and women.

The outcry from numerous people who suffer from boy and girl competition with adults takes the form of entreating the Government to legislate in two directions—viz., first, that all boys and