

intend. They cry out for the abolition of all overtime, on the ground of unfair and unequal distribution of employment, urging that one person is worked too much and so prevents another getting a fair share. The employers, however, are firm in this matter, saying that it is impossible, for instance, to relieve one who is weaving a particular web on a loom and supply his place after hours by "the man in the street." Orders must be met or trade will go elsewhere. There is no doubt much to be said on both sides of the question, there being, unfortunately, sometimes as good workers in the street as inside the factory.

One very great drawback upon overtime labour, especially for girls, is that they have to work at night, and this is for many reasons very undesirable. Parents complain that proper supervision of their children's conduct is impossible, and there is little doubt that night-work of any kind for women is open to grave objection.

*The Eight-hour Day.*—It is urged that the eight-hour day for women and young persons in factories is destroyed by the substitution of a forty-eight-hour week and a compulsory half-holiday. The Act of 1891 prescribed an eight-hour day, and also a half-holiday after 1 p.m. on Saturday afternoon. This gave five days at eight hours = forty hours, and five hours on Saturday, totalling forty-five hours. It might have been the intention of the Legislature to make a forty-five-hours week, or, on the other hand, it might have been the overlooked consequence of amendments, &c., causing the insertion of two conflicting sections—viz., that prescribing the eight-hours day and that prescribing the holiday. However, the forty-five-hour week having been for some time enjoyed by the workers, there has been expressed a very natural dislike to the enactment of the Factories Act of 1894, which practically abolishes the eight-hour day. At present, for the sake of the half-holiday, an extra hour (or part thereof) is worked each day, and in some cases harm is done to the health of the girls by time being voluntarily taken from their dinner-hour. It is, indeed, difficult in the war of conflicting interests to lay down rules of general benefit without sometimes trenching on the lines which limit the boundaries of each individual's interest and welfare, and the problem as to the better value of the eight-hour-day or the forty-eight-hour week has yet to be solved.

*Shearers' Accommodation.*—A very considerable addition to the work of Inspectors and to the expenses of the department was made when the section relating to shearers' accommodation was inserted in "The Factories Act, 1894." Stations in the wilds and the back country have to be visited, with much loss of time and expenditure for horse-hire. As most of the Factory Inspectors are police officers, and as some of these are unable to leave their posts for protracted periods, temporary officers had to make the visits. Stations in the Taupo country of the North Island or the Lake districts of the South are far outside the usual range of factory inspection; but it is in such places that shearers' accommodation has to be most strictly looked after. If in the future an amendment of the Factories Act should be thought desirable, I suggest that rules deciding to some degree what is proper accommodation should be defined somewhat more closely than at present, it being left in the existing Act entirely to the Inspector's discretion. Of course he can see (if he is able to visit just when shearing is on) that "their dwelling-places and working-places are in a cleanly, fit, and proper state"; but, when it is added that he shall decide whether "necessary accommodation is provided," too much is left to the individual judgment. One Inspector may have very different ideas as to what constitutes "necessary accommodation" to that possessed by another Inspector in the next district, if no common guide is set up, even in outline. It is certainly hard upon one stationholder that he is ordered to provide extensive and costly accommodation for shearers, when his neighbour a few chains away, but in another district, is let off with far less expensive requirements. In Native districts, too, there is this difficulty. An employer will plead that he has always had Maori shearers who provide their own sleeping and cooking accommodation, and who would not make use of any buildings, even if the owner erected them. On the other hand, the white shearers say that Natives are employed by some runholders out of meanness in outlay, and lately (it is asserted) from a desire to boycott men of their own race. Therefore, if such a squatter is not compelled to put up decent premises, he never will employ white men, and thus the liberal employer who has had to put up proper houses for his men is handicapped by being compelled by Inspectors to comply with regulations. I also suggest that to the words "amend or enlarge," in the second paragraph of section 52 of the Factories Act, should be added the words "or supply."

*Sweating.*—Again and again accusations of "sweating" are made in reference to the manufacturing industries. It is probably only in individual cases here and there that real sweating is existent in New Zealand. The provisions of the Factories Act prescribing that goods even partially made outside registered factories should have a ticket to that effect fastened upon them when exposed for sale practically stopped the issue of material for "home" manufacture to a great extent. It is doubtless evaded sometimes, as all industrial laws are evaded, by unprincipled employers or by desperate seekers for work, but the issue of material by respectable firms to women engaged in a murderous competition of cutting prices has virtually ceased. So, too, the regulation which constituted as a factory the place wherein two persons worked together at a handicraft has enabled a mother and daughter or two sisters to take "home-work" without the depreciatory label having to be affixed thereto. The price of such work is often low, but its cost and the worker's address have to be kept in the records of the employing firm, and the Inspector is able to visit such workrooms to see that the public health is not endangered by garments being made for sale in fever-dens or under insanitary conditions.

As to the "starvation prices" which are complained of as being paid to workwomen, especially in the north, there is no remedy for this but by giving every possible help to such workers to organize unions among themselves. It is not only that a solid body of workers could prevent cruel depreciation of prices, but the gain socially would be enormous. The possession of comfortable sitting-rooms, tea-rooms, and libraries belonging to a trade-union or to a woman's club would prevent many a girl from having to choose between having to sit all the evening in a gloomy bed-