

(though in general it will, no doubt, be productive of good in a number of individual cases) is a hardship, preventing otherwise fairly good boys and girls from getting a trade or taking to work they would like.

The privilege to work overtime has been largely taken advantage of, especially in the clothing trades, and, as the scale of payment has been on a fair basis, satisfaction has been given to all parties concerned.

During the year three owners of factories were charged with breaches of the Act, against whom six convictions were recorded.

Twenty-nine accidents have been reported, none fortunately of a serious nature, inquiries showing them all to be purely accidental.

On clause 54 I wish to repeat my opinion given last year—viz., that its provisions give too wide a latitude to employers in fixing the hours of work for this class (females and youths), hence factories all over the city have different hours of work, and the nine hours per day is generally exacted. Condemnatory of this clause is the fact that females and young persons are in the habit of working during the dinner-hour to avoid being kept late in the evening.

This Act is now fairly established, and looked on with favour from all sides, and is, I am of opinion, carried out fairly in this district. Factories have been nearly all more or less improved, and new ones are on better lines than formerly. Attention has been given to the requirements of the Act, employers willingly acquiescing, and as this has been what is considered a season of prosperity their tone is very cheerful. I trust the time is near at hand when employées will also benefit by a corresponding rise in wages and prices paid for work.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS.

Under the amendment this Act is working a good deal better than heretofore, as shopkeepers who were for Saturday and those who favoured Wednesday had the option of choosing which day they liked. Had it stopped here all would have been well; but granting the choice of any day in the week to small shopkeepers spread it over the whole week, consequently making it unsatisfactory and difficult to work. The general opinion among these small shopkeepers is that this is a mistake. Three shopkeepers were charged with breaches of the Act; seven convictions were recorded, and one dismissed owing to interpretation of *Gazette* notice. One publican was charged and convicted.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY-OFFICES ACT.

This is a new Act, and as the scale of fees has only recently been gazetted, action could not be taken. Each place is now registered, and from investigation and information received it was a much-needed Act.

I have, &c.,

H. FERGUSON,
Inspector.

E. Tregear, Esq., Secretary, Labour Department, Wellington.

WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 31st March, 1896.

I have the honour to submit for your consideration my report for the year ending 31st March, 1896, and to state that the Factories Act is very generally accepted as a useful measure, and is well observed by all persons concerned in it in this district.

There are to date 466 factories and workrooms in this district, employing 3,537 persons—i.e., 2,576 males and 1,011 females, against 430 factories, &c., employing 3,640 persons—i.e., 2,650 males and 990 females, last year, showing 76 males less employed than last year. That falling-off is chiefly in the boot and iron trades, both of which, I regret to say, have been very slack during the year just ended.

There has been a considerable falling-off in the number of permits granted to young persons under sixteen years desirous of going to work, 153 being granted to end of year, 31st December—i.e., fifty-nine boys and ninety-four girls. Many more applied for permits, which were not granted for various reasons, chiefly through their being under fourteen years of age.

Permission to work overtime has been granted to 4,111 persons, to work 12,207 hours, being an increase of 1,821 persons, working 5,522 hours more than last year; the Government Printing Office, tailoring factories, and laundries contributing largely to the increase, whilst dressmakers and bootmakers show a falling-off from last year. The following list will show the number of persons and the hours they worked:—

	Persons.	Hours.
Printers ...	1,106	3,308
Tailoring...	882	2,629
Laundries ...	624	1,962
Waterproof clothing	624	1,872
Dressmakers ...	510	1,530
Weavers ...	171	413
Tent-makers ...	50	150
Packing factories ...	43	129
Bootmakers ...	35	105
Brickmakers ...	24	72
Hat- and cap-makers	12	36
Totals ..	4,081	12,206