

small shops in which few or no assistants are employed, and the competition of such establishments, if they were allowed to remain open, would seriously injure the business of those who, on account of their enterprise in employing labour, would have to close when their assistants left. An Act limiting the hours of work of both sexes in factories and workshops, and the hours within which shops should be open, would cover the whole ground, though for public convenience exceptions should be made for certain shops (tobacconists, fruiterers, &c.) employing no assistants after a certain stated time of the day.

My attention has several times been drawn to the fact that the working-hours in warehouses and places of wholesale business are unregulated, and that these establishments fall between the operations of the two Acts—viz., those dealing with factories and with shops. They are not precisely offices, shops, nor places of manufacture. The hours worked in them are sometimes exhaustingly long, and the premises are at present uninspected. The reason that the matter has not been prominently brought forward before resembles that mentioned in another part of this report, and arises from the fact that in such establishments only men are employed, and there has been hitherto no attempt made to legally regulate the working-hours of men in this colony. It would be a step made in the right direction if some cognisance should be taken of the fact that complaints of too-long hours of business are made to the Department of Labour.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION.

The great success that has attended the introduction and progress of the Workmen's Compensation Bill in the British Parliament emboldens me to urge upon the attention of the New Zealand Government some measure of a similar character. The Employers' Liability Acts of this colony, however thoughtfully prepared and however much they might have been (at the time they passed) in advance of laws for a similar purpose in other countries, are behind the age in regard to the popular view of the subject. These Liability Acts are framed for the purpose of protecting workmen by holding over the heads of employers the possibility of the infliction of a heavy penalty under the name of compensation for injuries if through the employer's or his agent's carelessness, or through defective machinery or apparatus, the life or safety of a workman is endangered. If, however, an accident occurs through the fault of the workman himself there is no compensation to be recovered from the employer. Public opinion has progressed beyond this stage, and in cases of terrible accident arising from the use of machinery, or in mining operations, the view is promulgated that compensation from some source or other should be made to the working-man or his sorrowing family should death or grievous injury overtake him when engaged in his legitimate occupation. The human body, perfect in its way when at its best, is so frail and unreliable in its moments of weakness, so easily disturbed by physical or mental causes, that it is absurd to expect the same unvarying results from men and women as from proved and tried engines of brass and steel, without passions, maladies, or frailties. The tired mind gives way a moment, the voluntary muscles refuse to repeat the already thousand-times-repeated action, and then, in a moment, arrives death or some deadly injury. In New Zealand factories we have had instances of men who for years have tended some one machine faithfully—men who were sober, diligent, not to be excelled at their work; but for one instant there has been inattention (perhaps through some slight lesion of a blood-vessel in the brain), and there is a widow with her family unprovided-for, or a crippled man to look poverty in the face through all his broken life. How it happened is of slight moment, except to direct attention to the possibility of better guarding the working machinery; the important fact is that, whether the workman's fault or his employer's, another sacrifice has been offered up in the service of industrial progress.

This point of view is not merely humanitarian, it is based on sound reasoning. The workman has hired out the use of his body and brain to his employers, and his service is the equivalent rendered for his wage. His hire does not include payment for the destruction of his life or limbs, or even for the risk of them. Common-sense and experience forbid us to believe that working-people or any other human beings would deliberately injure themselves; therefore, if injury is occasioned neither through the employer's negligence nor at the employé's desire, it must arise in the common course of employment, and is one of the business liabilities to be calculated on and provided against.

It is questionable whether compensation should be paid by the employer directly interested. In Germany the Accident Insurance Fund is subscribed to by all employers on behalf of their men; such also is the view taken by the English Government. If that is considered right it must be compulsory that every person who employs another among machinery or in dangerous occupations should come under a State Accident Insurance Act, or join a society that insures the workman. Otherwise it would be obviously impossible and unjust to make an employer pay up to £300 (as in England) if any of his servants sustained injuries. Such a course would in many cases ruin a small employer, perhaps through no fault of his own; but, if the compensation had to be met from a fund to which every employer is compelled to contribute, the occasional losses could be born, without any too great individual infliction. In Germany the employers are grouped, according to their different trades, into "corporations" (in Austria according to territorial districts), and these bodies call up from their members such sums as they calculate they will require, thus making the levy, through skilled experts, only for the amount necessary as danger-risk. This form of self-government makes employers exceedingly careful in their administration of the funds, and they watch each other jealously lest any member careless of the life and limb of workmen may bring loss upon the corporation. Such self-government has been found to be very successful. Under the law the corporation may inspect factories, impose fines, and raise extra contributions from negligent employers. It is found that their inspectors are more strict and inflexible than the ordinary officials. Appliances and methods for preventing accidents are now far more studied and used than ever before. Added to this is the fact that there is not the same bitterness engendered