

will increase it to an area of 15 acres. The fruit-trees, which have hitherto been pruned well back, so as to give the trees more strength, will this season be allowed to go, and, no doubt, should the season be favourable, a large crop of the various fruits will be the result.

During the year four new cottages were built for the accommodation of the workers, and additions and alterations made to the original cottages so as to make them more comfortable. Of course, the tenants pay rent according to the size, &c.

The live-stock, such as milking-cows, horses, pigs, &c., keep in good order and health. Very few casualties or deaths have taken place; and this, no doubt, is owing to the good care on the part of those who have the charge and the working of them. The milking is done by some of the women living on the place, and is performed by contract.

The school continues to be well attended, and, so far as I can hear, the passes are satisfactory.

I have, &c.,

J. MACKAY,

Chief Clerk, Labour Department, and Inspector of Factories.

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

SIR,—

Wellington, 31st March, 1897.

I have the honour to submit for your consideration my report for the year ending 31st March, 1897. In doing so I can confidently state that the various Acts which I have the honour to administer under you are being well observed. The Factories Act, the most important of all, is working very smoothly, the great and only difficulty in this city being the class of buildings that are doing service as factories and workrooms. These buildings were never designed for their present use, and insurmountable difficulties have hitherto blocked the way to alterations and improvements being made—for example, this city until recently was almost entirely built of wood and corrugated iron: houses were built to meet the requirements of the times some fifteen or twenty years ago. Since then we have entered upon the brick era, and the city building-laws have been so altered that improvements within certain areas must be of a permanent nature, thus rendering alterations and extensions, in most cases, out of the question. That state of affairs, I am happy to say, is now fast disappearing, and we are now getting quite up-to-date factories erected. The sanitation works of the city are fast approaching completion, which should put us in the first place in the colony as far as sanitation goes.

There are to date 510 factories and workrooms, employing 4,865 persons—*i.e.*, 3,574 males and 1,291 females—showing an increase of fifty-six workrooms, employing 1,278 persons—*i.e.*, 998 males and 280 females—over last year's returns.

During the year ending 31st December, 1896, permits to persons under sixteen years of age were issued to 219 young persons—*i.e.*, 120 boys and 99 girls. Of the boys, forty-five passed Standard VI., forty-two passed Standard V., and thirty-three passed Standard IV. Of the girls, forty-three passed Standard VI., twenty-seven passed Standard V., and twenty-nine passed Standard IV. A tabulated return was submitted to you on the 6th instant. Great care is taken to ascertain correct particulars as to age and standard qualification, and many who have applied have failed to get permits, and have been prevented from obtaining work in factories and workrooms.

Overtime has been largely on the increase during the year. This is to be regretted; yet the permission is obtained under section 55, which provides for women and young persons under sixteen working on twenty-eight days for three hours per day. The section also provides for the payment of those persons. The evil, however, of overtime comes in when lads are required to work overtime without restriction as to hours or pay; and, whilst a boy of fifteen years is paid 6d. per hour, the youth of seventeen years will receive in many instances 3d. or 4d. per hour. Permission to work overtime was granted to 6,133 persons, to work 17,845 hours, as follows:—

	Persons.	Hours.
Tailoring trades	2,541	7,520
Laundry	1,318	3,954
Waterproof clothing	933	2,799
Dressmaking	550	1,434
Printing trade	429	1,176
Bootmaking	171	533
Shirtmaking	162	342
Upholstering	24	72
Confectionery	5	15
Totals	6,133	17,845

There were fourteen accidents reported during the year. Only one was of a serious nature—a young woman suffered the loss of all the fingers of her left hand through its being caught between the rollers of a steam-mangle. The others were of a slight nature, and from inquiries made proved to be purely accidental.

Whilst dealing with the question of accidents, I think an amendment in the Machinery Act is urgently required, because as the law at present stands any person can take charge of an engine in a factory or workshop without being the holder of a certificate of competency, as the engines are stationary and the driver is exempt. Yet it is quite possible that, through ignorance, the driver of an engine might blow half a dozen people into eternity. There is also another view which is worth considering. In the serious case mentioned the whole blame fell on the girl, as the mangle is considered quite safe, and if the girl had exercised due caution the accident would not have occurred. That may or may not be correct; but what more frequently happens is that inexperienced persons