

stated in my last report, I think the enormous importation of foreign goods, coupled with the adoption of improved labour-saving machinery, is responsible for the dislocation of labour in this trade.

In my previous report I had to chronicle the fact that there was a diminution in the quantity of overtime worked by those persons who come within the restriction of the Act. This year, on the contrary, there has been an enormous increase, which exceeds last year's operations by 15,730 hours. For the year 1898-99 there were 26,294 hours worked by 1,152 persons, while for 1899-1900 there were 42,024 hours worked by 1,523 persons. Comparing the figures of this year with those of the preceding one, there has been an average of twenty-seven hours of overtime worked per each person as against twenty-two hours for 1898-99. Where such a large quantity of overtime is required it is obvious that the business of manufacturers must be improving, and that to some considerable extent. In some instances—chiefly in the dressmaking, clothing, tailoring, and stationery manufacturing—the maximum overtime permitted by law has been reached, so these people have been refused further permits. It is pleasing also to record that there has been a general advance in the wages of the youth of both sexes. This has been most marked in connection with the operatives in biscuit- and jam-factories.

During the year nineteen accidents were reported to the department, but with the exception of two these have been of a slight nature. The exceptions were a boy losing a thumb in a rope-work, and a youth in an aerated-water factory also meeting with a similar accident. From inquiries instituted it was shown that both cases were the result of pure accident, no blame being attachable to the employer. In this connection I may state that, generally speaking, employers readily agree to adopt improvements suggested for the better protection of their employés where machinery is concerned.

Complaints are still rife regarding that part of the Act permitting employers to work certain employés forty-eight hours per week. At the outset few of the employers took advantage of that clause, but of late the practice has become more general, and one large dressmaking firm have recently availed themselves of its provisions, thereby largely curtailing the overtime payments previously paid to their employés. This necessarily creates considerable irritation amongst the employés concerned, which can only be allayed by a reversion to the Act of 1891.

With the foregoing exception the Act is working satisfactorily, and it is rarely necessary to invoke the aid of the Court to maintain its provisions.

#### SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

The same difficulties still exist regarding the satisfactory administration of the above Act—namely, the want of a universal closing-day, and the disabilities in the way of ascertaining whether the employés in restaurants, fruit-shops, &c., are being worked longer than the statutory hours allowed. Numerous complaints reach me from persons working in offices and wholesale warehouses in respect to the amount of night-work performed in these establishments. The complainants are invariably ignorant of the application of the law, which entirely excludes the wholesale places from any restriction. And cases are known where office employés are not only worked at night, but have also to put in several hours on Sunday, and in some instances take office-work to be done at their homes. There is no doubt this class of person requires more protection than is now afforded by the existing law. As a remedy, I would suggest that the provisions contained in section 55 of "The Factories Act, 1894," relating to hours, &c., should be made applicable to them.

#### SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

During the past year there has been a decrease of five of the above offices in Dunedin, there being now fifteen as against twenty in existence in 1898-99. The law controlling their operations is being strictly observed, and there have been no cases brought under my notice of any attempt to exceed the statutory charges.

#### EMPLOYMENT OF BOYS OR GIRLS WITHOUT PAYMENT PREVENTION ACT.

This measure has hardly been in existence a sufficient length of time to correctly gauge what its effects are likely to be. There is no question, however, but that employers have complied with the law, and it follows that employés who formerly gave their services gratis are now receiving remuneration for their work. A dislocation undoubtedly occurred amongst this class of labour when the Act came into force, but now that the principle of payment is established, and the trades affected in a thriving condition, I anticipate that those that were displaced will eventually find employment which will carry with it some remuneration.

#### WAGES PROTECTION ACT.

The introduction of this Act has allayed a great dissatisfaction which existed amongst the workers in this district, through having to submit to deduction from their wages for accident and other insurance schemes. Many employers, however, have publicly announced their intention of discontinuing the insurance policies when the present contract expires.

#### LABOUR.

This branch of the department was placed under my charge in July, 1899. Up to the 31st March, 1900, employment was found for 546 men, having 1,254 persons depending on them; of these, 505 were sent to Government works, and forty-one to private employment. The bulk of the former have been absorbed on the Otago Central Railway, which undertaking is now employing between three and four hundred men.

It might be presumed from the foregoing figures that Dunedin was exceptionally unfortunate in the matter of the unemployed. Such, however, is not the case. The vigorous prosecution of