

birth-certificates were demanded, and if not forthcoming were procured by this department, many hundreds of these certificates being thus provided free of cost to the children or their parents. The Act does not, in my opinion, provide sufficient protection for working-children, as many of these are employed in small establishments having less than three work-people, and thus not coming under the definition of "factory." That any boy should be allowed to work from daylight till dark, without holidays, without proper intervals for rest and food, and in an impure atmosphere is improper, but at present not illegal. I regret to say that many such instances have been called to my attention.

A few cases of accident have presented themselves during the past months, and in all such cases Inspectors have assured themselves by personal investigation that every precaution had been taken to guard the workers from the machinery. The accidents generally arise from momentary carelessness bred by long familiarity with danger, and under such circumstances accidents seem almost unavoidable. In one case where typhoid fever resulted fatally, and where rumour said that deceased brought infection from a factory, the report of the medical officer cleared the employer of any such imputation of keeping his premises in an unhealthy condition, and pointed out the probable source of the disease in the private dwelling of the sufferer.

The general appearance of the workers in New Zealand factories is of a very creditable character. The men seem industrious and contented, the women and children healthy, well clothed, and well nourished. The morality is, as a whole, far above that of the same class of workers in more settled countries, the reason for which is apparent, in that the employés are not drawn from the ranks of a pauper population but that almost all have respectable homes, and that the majority of the girls live with their parents. The advantages of colonial life present themselves in a very efficient form to any one viewing the crowd pouring from the gates of some New Zealand factory, and comparing the appearance of the workers with that of those in more densely populated and older countries.

I append tables showing particulars in regard to factories, wages, ages of workers, &c.

These tables are compiled from data gathered up to the 31st March (the end of the financial year), the Act then having been three months in operation. Since that time several new districts have been gazetted and Inspectors appointed. The tables do not show how many persons are employed in these industries throughout the colony, but only those persons working in "factories" as defined by the Act—*i.e.*, in establishments employing three or more persons, or using mechanical motive power.

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