

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACTS.

These Acts have worked very smoothly during the year. Employers of labour are becoming much more conversant with the different clauses which are consequently easier to administer. But what I wish to draw special attention to is the fact that some restriction should be put upon the number of hours worked by shop-assistants. If the eight-hour day should become universal in New Zealand, this class will benefit by it more than any other. Not only in the drapery trade, but in almost every line of business men are brought back night after night and compelled to work excessively long hours, in many cases without extra remuneration.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICE ACT.

Not a single complaint has been made to me this year against registry-office keepers. The great dearth of domestic servants is leaving both office-keeper and mistress very much at the mercy of the servant. Unfortunately, I have no means of collecting any reliable information regarding wages, &c., in connection with this class of labour, but, so far as I can ascertain, wages have increased considerably.

I have, &c.,

MARGARET SCOTT HAWTHORNE, Inspector.

E. Tregear, Esq., Chief Inspector of Factories.

Department of Labour, Women's Branch, Wellington,

SIR,—

31st March, 1901.

I have the honour to submit to you my report for the year ended 31st March, 1901.

The number of women and girls placed in situations was 256. I could have placed still more in employment had it been possible to get girls. The procuring of girls for domestic work becomes more difficult each year, as nearly all young women prefer factory, or day work of any sort, to domestic service. A much higher wage is now offered than formerly, but even that does not prove sufficient inducement to alter their disinclination for domestic work. I hope that some means will yet be found to make domestic work more attractive to the rising generation, for surely there is not any knowledge more necessary than this, when a woman gets a home of her own, no matter what her station in life may be.

There is a great deal of good done through the Women's Branch for women with families, and also for widows who are left badly provided for, by securing for them plenty of day work, for which they are well paid, and, of course, they are provided with meals while at work.

I remain, &c.,

HELEN STAVELEY, Officer in Charge.

E. Tregear, Esq., Chief Inspector of Factories.

CHRISTCHURCH.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Christchurch, 31st March, 1901.

I have the honour to submit my report of the work of this branch of the department for the year now terminated.

The year has been one of exceptional activity in nearly every branch of the skilled trades; the boot industry is the exception. In this trade, however, things have been of a somewhat more satisfactory nature than for some time past; but, at the same time, there is room for considerable improvement. The engineering and iron trades have been exceptionally busy, many firms, I understand, having had to refuse orders. The building trades have been exceedingly active, due in a measure to the erection of the large and magnificent Agricultural Hall and Exhibition Buildings, the enlargement and erection of new and up-to-date dwellings and business premises, and preparations for carrying out the celebrations of the Canterbury Jubilee have contributed to the prosperity of these trades. Cabinetmaking firms have not been able to overtake the demands of the trade, although their employes have worked a great deal of overtime. The tanneries and woollscouring works have on the whole had a good year. The tailoring, clothing, and dress-making establishments have had a most unusually busy year; many firms have had to refuse orders, although they were working all the overtime permitted by the Act. The woollen-mills are still rushed with work, and will have considerable difficulty in overtaking the orders ahead of them.

UNSKILLED LABOUR.

The condition of this class of workers has been steadily improving for some years past, and this last year the number of applicants for employment has been less than for any previous year since the inception of the department. The real unemployed difficulty is fast vanishing out of sight; work has been found for all the *bona fide* unemployed. 274 men, with 413 persons depending upon them, have been assisted through this office during the year, 218 having been sent to Government works, and fifty-six to private employment.

FATORIES ACT.

This Act is working fairly satisfactorily, and on the whole I have had little or no difficulty in enforcing its provisions. It is pleasing to note that the Government have under consideration a consolidating measure which, if it becomes law, will enable the Inspectors to administer the law much more easily, and the comfort and safety of the workers will be secured without any inconvenience to the employers.

The Employment of Boys or Girls without Payment Prevention Act is working very smoothly, and the demand for both boys and girls is greater than before the Act came into operation.