

The labour-market has on the whole been satisfactory, the building trade has been busy in both brick and wood, and there are good signs of its continuing so for some time to come; the present prosperity, together with the indications I have mentioned, are doubtless the cause of several branches of this trade forming unions for the purpose of regulating their wages. The engineering trades have been busy throughout the year, and there is a slight increase in the number of hands employed. The coach- and carriage-builders, saddle- and harness-makers, and other skilled workers employed in the various factories and workrooms have all had good steady employment.

Employment for unskilled labour has been more plentiful than for several previous years. A good many of the men engaged were total strangers, attracted no doubt by the work going on in this district. However, it is satisfactory to be able to say that there was no difficulty in meeting the requirements of those seeking work. The number of men assisted to Government and private work is thirty-six single and sixty-seven married, making a total of 103, having 303 persons persons depending on them for support.

FACTORIES ACT.

This Act continues to work well, and I have very little difficulty in its administration. Still there are portions of it that require amending. Power should be given to the Inspector to deal with the owners of premises where permanent improvements are required, as it is unfair to ask a tenant to make such improvements. Yet in some instances I have had to do so. The number of factories and workrooms registered in this district is 144, employing 1,038 persons—*i.e.*, 845 males and 193 females; this is a slight increase on last year's returns, due principally to an extension of my district.

EMPLOYMENT OF BOYS OR GIRLS WITHOUT PAYMENT PREVENTION ACT.

This Act is working very well, but I understand there has been some difficulty in getting girls who have just left school into workrooms, the employers preferring to take those that have had a little experience.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

This Act works well. I think, however, it wants amending so as to give power to Inspectors to deal with owners of property, the same as I suggested for the Factories Act.

I have, &c.,

L. D. BROWETT, Inspector of Factories.

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

WANGANUI.

Department of Labour, Wanganui, March, 1901.

SIR,— I have the honour to present to you my annual report for the year ending the 31st March, 1901.

FACTORIES ACT.

There are 121 factories and workrooms registered this year, employing 801 males and 203 females, making a total of 1004 hands, as against 723 males and 138 females, or a total of 861 hands last year, an increase of 143—88 males and 65 females.

Certificates of fitness under section 58 have been granted to four boys and ten girls, under sixteen years of age, to work in factories or workrooms. Overtime-permits under section 55 have been issued to twenty factory and workroom owners to work nine boys sixty-three hours, which includes seven half-holidays, and 112 girls and women 1,593 hours, which includes 216 half-holidays.

Three accidents have been reported during the year.

The factories and workrooms, with one or two exceptions, are comfortable and in good order, while the sanitary arrangements are, on the whole, satisfactory.

There has been a considerable amount of overtime worked, chiefly tailors and dressmakers, but in no case has the statutory maximum been reached.

SHOPS AND SHOP-ASSISTANTS ACT.

This Act is working well, excepting in regard to assistants working at night. That the night-work imposed on the tired assistants could be obviated I feel sure, for there are many establishments here, doing large businesses, where the employes are never asked to return to work after six o'clock, excepting on Saturday night. If the Legislature could be induced to make these night-working firms pay their assistants for the overtime, the evil would, I think, to a great extent, cease.

The sanitary arrangements and sitting-accommodation of the business places where females are employed are, with two exceptions, all that can be desired.

There have been four prosecutions during the year. Fines were imposed in three cases, and one case was dismissed.

LABOUR.

Seventy-five men have been registered in the books during the year, forty-three of whom obtained work through this office. Several of the good class found work for themselves, and the remainder, consisting mostly of men who are satisfied if they make a shilling or two to buy a little food to carry them on the road, did not call a second time at the office. Work has been fairly plentiful, and the genuine working-man has not had much difficulty in getting something to do. Tradesmen of all classes, especially those in the building trades have had a good year.