

from the men. In the two factories I visited in Christchurch I observed the improved tone of the girls in manner and appearance. In both these instances they worked in a room to themselves under the charge of a girl forewoman, who had power of engagement and dismissal. The dining-rooms in these two factories were exceptionally well kept, and the fresh flowers on the tables showed that the girls took a personal pride in their surroundings.

WOOLLEN MILLS, ETC.

I visited the woollen mills at Petone, Kaiapoi, Timaru, Oamaru, Roslyn, and Mosgiel. The conditions of the women workers in these factories was on the whole highly satisfactory. In one instance I found the closet-accommodation for the two sexes had been placed in too close proximity to insure privacy for the girls, and requested that an alteration be made. Girls employed in the woollen mills are paid from the start, and gradually work their way up to the looms, where skilled hands may earn £2 and over per week. One must have seen the dismal, high-storied mills and factories of the Old World in order fully to appreciate such mills as Mosgiel, Roslyn, and Kaiapoi, in their environment of hills, wooded parks, and plantations. One must have known the ways of the Old World factory-girl, as with bare head, gaudy shawl, and white apron she noisily comes and goes at the clang of the big factory-bell, to appreciate the contrast of the neatly-dressed, well-educated New Zealand factory-hand as after her eight hours' work she makes her way to the garden-surrounded homestead, probably her own or her parents' freehold.

The hosiery knitting industry employs many young women in the South Island. It is a skilled trade, and good wages may be earned on piecework. There is no actual term of apprenticeship: the general method seems to be that the learner or apprentice is put to work with an efficient hand. The latter takes her wages for the first month, then part of her wages for another fixed period, then the learner is put on piecework for herself. Waterproof-clothing manufacture is another trade our girls are learning, and at which a skilful hand may make a good subsistence-wage. Wax-vesta making is another industry but recently established in New Zealand. There is a match-factory in Dunedin and one in Wellington. The principal work for the girls employed is box-filling. A quick-fingered and industrial girl on piecework may earn from 15s. to 18s. 6d. a week at this. Here, again, the contrast to the London match-factory girl is pleasingly apparent.

My work during the past year has been of deep interest, and it is not altogether without regret that I leave the Department of Labour on my promotion to another branch of the service. I have been impressed with the friendly feeling existing between employers and employed throughout New Zealand, where public opinion would speedily brand an inhumane employer. Still, there is need for watchful supervision on the part of the Inspectors to guard against breaches of the law, more especially in respect to the half-holiday and overtime. Neither are the sanitary arrangements as yet all that could be desired. In the towns the Inspector finds that alterations cannot be made until the lease runs out, and it is difficult to make landlords understand how conditions of labour have changed, and that decent and separate closet-accommodation is required by law for both sexes. In the country districts arrangements are very primitive, and I have found much to do by way of putting things on a better footing for the girl-workers. An overscrupulous delicacy prevents many young women from making any complaint to the local Inspector or their employer, and I found as I moved about the country that the women workers were pleased to have one of their own sex to speak to concerning sanitary requirements, and also that many employers were glad to accept suggestions made through me to secure greater privacy or better accommodation for their employées. There is much still to be done by a woman Inspector in this direction.

I would not conclude this report without bringing under your notice the almost uniform courtesy with which my visits of inspection have been received. The majority of the employers of women's labour seemed desirous of showing me everything, to give me fullest information, and willingly to carry out suggestions made for the comfort and health of those in their employ.

GRACE NEILL, Inspector of Factories.

AUCKLAND.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Auckland, 31st March, 1895.

I beg to submit for your information a report of the department under my charge during the past year.

LABOUR.

Since my last report 198 men have been assisted to work through the Bureau, of whom 142 were married, with 732 persons dependent on them, and 56 were single. Of the above, 88 were sent to private work, and 110 to Government works.

Doubtless owing to the fact that a good number of single men and new arrivals found their way to country districts, thereby supplying local wants, applications from these sources for hands have been less than on former years.

Though there has at all times during the year been a number of unemployed and, no doubt, individual cases of hardship, still, by the judicious opening of public works and energy of the men, it has been fairly tided over.

I am sorry to say that at the present time, owing to a large number of men coming to town through the completion of work on which they were employed, and the near approach of winter, things have rather a gloomy appearance, which will, I trust, be dispersed by works already contemplated by Government.

I am pleased to note the project of alternate work and occupation of land inaugurated by the Minister, and consider it the best solution of the "unemployed" difficulty.