

and beautiful scenery. The emolument to this colony for such tourist-traffic has been usually very considerable; but during the last two years the commercial trouble under which Australia has laboured was reflected to us by the decrease of travellers and the loss of traffic. With the reviving prosperity of the sister colonies, we may look forward to renewed communication, not only for sympathetic but for financial reasons.

It has been found necessary, on account of the number of men out of employment, to put the co-operative labourers at public works on three-quarter-time. This is one of those temporary economies sometimes forced on by pressure of circumstances when the money to be spent is limited by vote, and the number of applicants is in excess. Request has been made to Ministers that the same principle should be applied to skilled workmen, such as carpenters, painters, and others employed on Government buildings, &c. There are considerable objections to any such course. Although it is difficult to know how to meet the demands of unemployed artisans, and although it may seem at first sight fair that those already in work should share their time with less fortunate craftsmen, I fear that the effect of such an innovation would be disastrous to workmen by lowering wages generally. So soon as it was found that a carpenter, working four days a week, received only £1 10s. for the week, so soon would there grow up an accepted idea in the market that a carpenter's ordinary wage was £1 10s. a week. The effect would be disastrous to the skilled trades. It would be better if carpenters and others getting 8s. or 10s. a day for every working-day in a week should voluntarily set aside 2s. a day towards a fund for the relief of those out of work in their own trade than that they should suffer the general lowering of wages.

I have received many complaints from working-men during the year as to the manner in which they have been received when seeking work by landholders in the country districts, and there has been no lack of accusations from all parts of the country as to hands being discharged unnecessarily in order to embarrass the department in its efforts to provide employment. I am afraid that the expression, "Go and get work from the Government you put in," has been only too frequently used; but, on the other hand, it must be remembered that the phrase is perhaps more often the expression of momentary irritation than of real feeling, and that the pecuniary position of employers has been in such a depressed state that they have, in some cases, not been able to find funds to make improvements or carry on necessary work, much less to exercise a large indiscriminate hospitality. It should, however, not be forgotten by them that it is to the fluctuating character of the work they sometimes offer that the formation of a class of wandering labourers is due, and that if it were not for shearing, harvesting, &c., requiring numbers of men at one time, and dispensing with them afterwards, the very existence of such a class would be unnecessary. Its disappearance would leave the larger landholders and flockmasters in a very awkward position; therefore the necessities and poverty of such workmen should meet with at least civil treatment.

The Labour Journal has been carried on regularly, and has met with appreciation from those for whom its articles are intended—viz., those who have not time or means to procure and peruse the many journals and magazines which contain articles touching on the social and industrial conditions of the working-classes. Those responsible for the Journal have endeavoured to treat all sides of a question with fairness, and to show the different lights in which labour problems appear from many points of view. That the Journal should gain the approbation of every one is impossible; the effort to please universally would be in vain, because to a certain order of mind the views expressed must be their views, and those only. Nevertheless, it has met with approbation not only in New Zealand but in other lands.

The department, during the year, has granted assistance to 3,030 men, having 8,883 persons dependent upon them. Of the men assisted, 2,007 men were married and 1,023 single. Of these, 2,136 were sent to public and 894 to private employment. Some were assisted by means of passes to places where work was plentiful. A detailed account will be found among the statistics accompanying this report. The numbers assisted since the establishment of the department in June, 1891, are as follows:—

	Men.	Dependents.
June, 1891, to 31st March, 1892	2,593	4,729
1st April, 1892, to 31st March, 1893	3,874	7,802
1st April, 1893, to 31st March, 1894	3,371	8,002
1st April, 1894, to 31st March, 1895	3,030	8,883
	12,868	29,416

Total, 42,284 persons.

WOMEN'S LABOUR.

Those interested in women's labour and the position of feminine workers in New Zealand will find in the appended report by Mrs. Grace Neill some valuable information. The manner in which she has carried out her duties in the department has not only justified the creation of a woman-inspectorship but also the wisdom of personal choice in her appointment. Mrs. Neill has lately been transferred to an Inspectorship of Hospitals and Asylums, where her long experience will be of great service.

The provision of employment for women and girls is another branch of duty lately assumed by the Labour Department. It was thought neither wise nor just that the necessities of one-half of our population should be neglected, or that women-citizens of our colony should not be provided with equal means of escaping destitution as their male relatives, so far as the resources of the Government allow. The departmental machinery already existent permits without expense the concentration of valuable information in regard to the position of female as well as male labour, and with slight addition to our resources an engine of considerable potency will probably be exercised. The office lately set up in the Government Buildings, under the charge of Miss