

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Wellington, 9th May, 1904.

I have the honour to report to you that the branch of the Department under my charge has found work for 386 women and girls during the year ended the 31st March, 1904; in thirty cases work was found on several occasions during the year.

As few Wellington girls go to service, nearly all those assisted have come from other parts of New Zealand, England, and Australia, a most welcome addition to the ranks of domestic workers, who are few in proportion to the number of employers wanting help in their homes.

The country employer finds it hard to get help of any kind. So anxious are some of them to get a servant that elderly women and women with a child to support, or even two children, are willingly taken into employers' homes, and get a fair wage as well. Hotels, as usual, get the pick of domestic workers. The wages given are high, and the privileges many. Waiting in tea-rooms is also an occupation much favoured by girls who have homes in Wellington. Factories and laundries employ so many of our working-girls that few are left to take domestic work. The reason given by the girls who have formerly been in domestic service and since taken to factory-work is the dullness and monotony of housework. Some maids assert that with some mistresses it is useless to get one's work done quickly and well, as other tasks are found for them to do, which they find very discouraging. I think there are few employers to be found nowadays who do not appreciate good servants, and do all in their power to make them as comfortable as possible and to retain their services.

I think, from observation, that a much better understanding is gradually arising between mistress and maid, founded on mutual respect and usefulness to each other, and on the more solid basis of a business transaction—of being well paid for work well done, and leaving all personal feelings aside. I am sure the trifling differences that sometimes occur between mistress and maid will soon be a thing of the past, the reason being that domestic work will be considered one of the most essential acquirements of women, no matter to what class in society they may belong.

Casual work has been found for a number of women with families to support, whose husbands are temporarily out of work, &c.

The usefulness of the Women's Branch of the Labour Department to strangers is much appreciated, and really good work is done in helping girls by advice and practical assistance.

I have, &c.,

HELEN STAVELEY.

Edward Tregear, Esq.,

Secretary to the Department of Labour, Wellington.

CHRISTCHURCH.

SIR,—

Department of Labour, Christchurch, 6th April, 1904.

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

GENERAL.

The period under review has been one of fairly satisfactory progress in most branches and departments of skilled trades.

The engineering and iron trades maintained the steady advance with which they closed last year until about the middle or a little later in this year, when there was a considerable falling-off in the engineering, boilermaking, and blacksmithing branches. These branches have remained in a quiet condition, with no apparent immediate prospects of improvement. On the other hand, the moulding, range-making, and other branches are in a very healthy state, with fair prospects of a continuance of the present activity.

The building trades have on the whole been very active during the year. Good and efficient tradesmen have been at a premium. A large number of underpaid journeymen carpenters have found employment in consequence of the scarcity of competent hands. Bricklayers, stonemasons, plumbers, gasfitters, and plasterers have had an exceedingly busy year. Since the end of February there has been a marked diminution in the joiner and carpenter branches, and quite a number of skilled artisans have had to be content with intermittent employment.

The furniture trades are still in a buoyant condition, with plenty of employment for all hands engaged; the outlook is bright and promising.

The boot and shoe trades have a much better tone than for years past, and so far as one can judge the improvement is of a permanent character.

The saddlery and harness trades are still, and to all present appearances are likely to remain, in a most unsatisfactory state, owing to the large quantity of imported goods coming into the market. The employment in these trades has been very irregular.

Tanning, fellmongering, and wool-scouring works have not been so busy as during the two previous years. It is difficult, owing to the intermittent nature of these industries, to ascertain with any degree of accuracy their true state.

The tailoring, clothing, and dressmaking trades have had a good year; in the busy seasons a considerable amount of overtime was worked—in many instances the full limit allowed by the Factories Act; and the present prospects are such as to inspire confidence.

The woollen-mills have been exceedingly busy all through the year; they have had great difficulty indeed in securing anything like an adequate supply of females for their hosiery departments. By replacing the old looms with more modern and faster ones they have been able to increase their output considerably; they have also considerably enlarged the hosiery department by additional new and commodious buildings.

Laundry-work has gone ahead by leaps and bounds, and the number of employees has about doubled during the year.