

176. With regard to Miss Howden's appointment, do you produce a letter you wrote to the Department at the time you made this engagement with Miss Howden?—Yes, as follows: "25th June, 1907.—The Secretary for Education, Wellington.—SIR,—A Miss Howden, recommended by Mrs. Scale, applied for the position of clerk in this institution. She seems a suitable woman, over thirty, and has been clerk in Coker's Hotel and Warner's Hotel here. Her people are farmers in Geraldine, I understand. Mrs. Scale says she is capable and loyal, and would be a help to manage the girls. Of course, it would be new work, and take some learning. After a long talk, I told her that I thought the Department would give her £1 a week till the new wing was opened, and then she, with Miss Hunt, would probably get £60 a year. She will live at the Home, and take certain duties when required, in addition to clerical work during the day—in fact, be a useful person in the Home. She is anxious to be settled. I shall be glad of an early reply.—E. T. BRANTING."

177. Up to that time what did you want?—I wanted some one to learn the clerical work and also to help with the girls morning and evening.

178. Who was doing the clerical work at that time?—Miss Hunt and myself.

179. Was Miss Hunt exclusively employed at the clerical work?—Oh, no.

180. In addition, she was performing attendant's duties?—Every afternoon, and she went down with the girl who looked after the cows and the poultry in the morning.

181. When Miss Howden came to see you, what did you tell her would be her duties?—I said I thought the three of us would make a strong combination and work happily together for the benefit of the institution, and that she would help Miss Hunt in her duties and relieve occasionally.

182. Miss Howden alleges that you engaged her as a clerk alone?—I did not.

183. Was it clearly understood that Miss Howden was to be a clerk attendant?—Yes; that was the position.

184. Very much the same as Miss Hunt was doing?—No; Miss Hunt had more duties than Miss Howden. Miss Howden would only relieve on an afternoon when Miss Hunt had to take a girl to a situation.

185. When Miss Hunt was here, would Miss Howden have any other duties than her clerical duties?—Yes. In the evening, when the staff was off duty, she sat with the girls, and helped to keep order in the workroom. There were always two of the staff off duty, and that made us somewhat weak.

186. Miss Howden complains that she was not engaged to do cow work: what does she mean by that?—I do not know.

187. Did Miss Howden have to supervise the milking?—She had to be with the girl who did the milking and attended to the poultry—just to walk about.

188. She had nothing to do with the animals themselves?—No; none of the staff have.

189. That was understood when Miss Howden came?—Yes.

190. And the salary was to be what?—£52 a year, until the new wing was opened.

191. That is, the building that has not been commenced yet?—Yes; I thought it would have been commenced before now.

192. What was to happen when the building was opened?—I said I hoped then to be able to give her clerical work only. The staff would be readjusted, and there would be more of them, and things would be different; but that until then things must go on as they were.

193. What salary was Miss Hunt getting at the time you engaged Miss Howden?—I think it was £45, but I would not be positive. It may have been £50.

194. Miss Howden was getting quite as much as Miss Hunt?—More than her.

195. How long had Miss Hunt been here then?—Two years and a half, and she was also doing almost all the work Miss Howden was to do.

196. Who has been doing the clerical work since Miss Howden left?—Miss Hunt.

197. In addition to all her other duties?—Yes.

198. Is she getting any more money for that now?—She is getting more than £50 a year now.

199. Have you asked for a clerk who would do nothing else?—No.

200. Would you have any trouble in getting a woman to act as clerk attendant?—No.

201. Did Miss Howden make any objection to going on these lines?—Not the slightest.

202. Did you use these words to Miss Howden after she was engaged, "probably you would like to relieve Miss Hunt every other week, and that will enable you to have a long lie in every other week"?—I do not think I said such a thing to anybody.

203. If it was Miss Howden's duty to relieve Miss Hunt you would tell her so: you would not put it that way?—I do not think so. I am not in the habit of using these indefinite terms.

204. After Miss Howden was here a short time she went to Timaru on some case of sickness with her people, and was away a fortnight?—Yes.

205. Was she on full pay at that time?—Yes.

206. Who was doing her duty?—Miss Hunt.

207. I think you wrote to her that if she wished to stay any longer she had better send in her resignation?—Yes.

208. Did Miss Howden then come back?—Yes.

209. How long was it after that before she had the influenza?—Not very long.

210. Between the time Miss Howden returned from Timaru and the time she had the influenza, did she complain at all about being delicate?—She had a cough, and was not a strong woman.

211. When she got the influenza, it is suggested you had no sympathy with her in any shape or form: tell us what was done?—I said she had better stay in bed. The doctor ordered her hot baths, and Miss Mills attended to her while she had them. I sent her in such diet as I thought it advisable she should take, but she refused to take it. She would not do anything I thought was for her benefit, so we left her to the doctor.