

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT BRANCHES.

The Women's Employment Branches continue to do exceptionally good work. For the twelve months ending the 31st March, 1910, they have found employment for 2,791 women and girls, mostly in domestic service. The persons assisted included 571 married women and 2,220 single women. Of the whole number, 1,335 were from the North Island, 1,164 from the South Island, 51 from Australia, 239 from Great Britain, and two from miscellaneous parts. Since the establishment of these branches 5,406 women have been assisted.

In January of this year a branch was opened in Nelson, under the conduct of Miss Emerson, who also assists in the clerical work of the Inspector of Factories' Office.

Considering the difficulty of securing domestic servants, the fact that such a large number was engaged during the year appears to me to be very satisfactory. The weekly wages offered to suitable girls gets higher as the demand grows keener, and in any of the chief centres of the Dominion competent domestics can obtain situations at from 16s. to £1 per week. On reference to the reports from the officers in charge of these branches it will be noticed that there is still a desire on the part of the girls to take employment where the hours and pay have been fixed by awards of the Arbitration Court. There is no doubt that much of the dislike to domestic work is due to the uncertain hours and irregular holiday periods.

THE SHEARERS' AND AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT.

The work done under this Act is dealt with in detail in the report of the Chief Inspector of Factories. A large amount of inspection work was done during the year, and no less than 475 stations were visited. In 357 cases the accommodation was reported as satisfactory, while in the remainder—118—improvements will have to be effected in order to satisfy the requirements of the Act. The improvement generally in the accommodation provided for shearers during the last five years is very striking, and those affected have admitted that the Department's work in this direction has been very much appreciated.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

There were 38 cases brought before the Court under this Act, 1 less than last year. Six workers partially incapacitated by accident received amounts totalling £174 18s. In 9 cases the widows and relatives of fatally injured workmen received sums totalling £1,694 19s. In 7 additional cases arising out of fatal accidents the defendants admitted liability for the amount claimed, and the Court had merely to apportion the total between the various dependants. The amount thus apportioned totalled £2,601 14s. 6d. Five persons were ordered to receive weekly payments till convalescence. These weekly amounts varied from £1 to £1 10s. In two cases the Court decided that the plaintiffs were entitled to the benefits of the Act, but ordered the parties to come to a private agreement as to the amount of compensation. Nine cases were dismissed.

The Act continues to give considerable protection and relief from anxiety to the whole body of manual workers. It could be improved by legislative requirement that in all cases settled out of Court information concerning amounts so paid should be forwarded to the Labour Department. We publish at present an account of only those cases which have been settled after litigation in the Courts, but it would be of great service to know each year the whole amount paid by employers, insurance companies, &c., to workmen who have suffered industrial accidents, or to their families. It is only when we consider the full extent of such accident compensation that we can gain an idea of its great advantages to the community.

The following cases may be of special interest and worthy of notice :—

(1.) The father of a seaman who was drowned in the wreck of the "Kia Ora" claimed that he and his wife were partly dependent on the earnings of their son. Evidence showed that although deceased had from time to time given his mother various sums, his parents were, nevertheless, not dependent on their son's earnings. The Court found as follows: The fact that a son gives money from time to time to his parents is not of itself sufficient to establish a dependency. It is necessary to go farther, and to show that the moneys thus received were used by the parents to maintain themselves, and that without these moneys they could not have lived as they were living before the assistance was withdrawn. That they might have been able to maintain themselves at a lower standard of comfort without the assistance does not make any difference if they did in fact use the moneys received for the purpose of maintaining themselves. (Decisions, &c., Vol. viii, 1909, p. 17.)