

week prior to his death he was in farm employment beyond Wanganui.) Of the thirty-five boys in class (a), ten are now not under the control of the Department, having reached the age of twenty-one years during the period under review. In class (b) three of the boys are not in farm employment, and the behaviour of the other two has not been entirely satisfactory, although their misconduct has not been of a very serious nature. The three former will reach the age of twenty-one years very shortly. In class (c), in addition to the seven reported as unsatisfactory last year, there are now two who have "cleared out." No special steps have been taken by the Department to bring them under control, as unless the boys are content to work in an amicable and friendly way with us I think it better to allow them to follow their own inclinations. I have no reason to believe otherwise than that some of the boys in class (c) are doing very well on their own initiative, and that some of them have continued in farm employment, though I doubt whether they are taking the same care of their earnings, and are studying the same necessity for thrift, as the forty boys who have been and are under the guardianship of the Department. During March last I had the privilege of giving evidence before the Empire Trade Commission on the working of this experiment, and the Commissioners were apparently pleased with the particulars placed before them and of the undoubted success of the experiment.

The earnings banked on behalf of the boys by the Department now total £2,024 7s. 2d. The clothing, boots, &c., required by the boys are still purchased by the Department on their behalf. Very few of the employers now find their boys in clothing, as both parties have been content to leave it to the Department, owing to the purchases being made in a cheaper market. Serviceable articles of good quality only are sent to the boys by the Department.

Beyond the illness and death of the lad already mentioned, the whole of the boys have enjoyed the best of health, and those visited by the departmental officers have greatly improved in physical appearance since their arrival.

The Department again invited the lads to send Christmas presents to their parents and relations in London and Liverpool, and the response was very generous, most of the lads sending £2 in money. In other cases presents of cheese and frozen lamb were sent.

In terms of the agreement made between Mr. Sedgwick and the Department the whole of the boys will be free of the control of the Department in January, 1914. I have little doubt that the lads concerned will appreciate the interest and care displayed in their welfare, and probably in later years will more fully realize the splendid opportunity afforded them of learning a useful occupation and of fitting them to become useful citizens in the new "Britain overseas."

I have again to thank the farmers and the boys themselves for their loyalty to the agreements made, and also our several agents for the sympathetic interest displayed in the success of the experiment.

SERVANTS' REGISTRY OFFICES ACT.

There were only two prosecutions under this Act. One case was for keeping servants as lodgers; the other was for failing to keep a book of engagements. Convictions were obtained in both cases.

It will be remembered that in last year's report a special inspection of the books of registry-office keepers had been made, when it was ascertained that, despite the fact that the regulations of 1907 had reduced the fees payable by the workers and increased those payable by employers, it was found that the employers were either not charged at all for services rendered or that they paid only a very small fee. Instead of employers paying approximately double the fees paid by the workers, they actually paid only about two-thirds—£2,786 instead of £7,594—which it will be seen is approximately £5,000 less than the registry-office keepers were entitled to charge. Following upon the publication of the figures a new scale has been drawn up, and it becomes operative on the 1st June next. The general effect of it is to reduce the fees payable by workers for engagements actually made by about 6d. all round.

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT BRANCHES.

These branches of the Department still find their operations restricted very greatly by the dearth of applicants for domestic service. The number of persons assisted this year (2,072) is 143 less than for the previous year. The total persons assisted in each of the centres are as follow: Auckland, 591; Wellington, 649; Christchurch, 427; and Dunedin, 272. At Masterton and Nelson 133 women and girls were assisted to work during the year. Although the conditions of work as to wages and hours continue to improve, it will be seen from the reports of the officers in charge of these branches that emphasis is made of the increasing difficulty in securing domestic workers.

Of the total number assisted (2,072), 438 were married and 1,634 were single or widows; 381 came from Great Britain, 29 from the Commonwealth, and the remainder from within New Zealand. The assistance afforded by oversea immigrants was slightly better than in previous years, but the number is still very far short of the legitimate requirements of mistresses.