

80. Is there anything you wish to add generally?—I just wish to testify as to the respect I feel for Mrs. Branting. It has been growing every day since I came here.

81. Are you the sole Official Visitor?—No; there are three.

82. You are probably here more than any one else?—Yes.

83. Is that on account of the extra interest you take in the institution?—Yes. I took a great interest in the girls from the first.

84. Were your duties ever defined?—No.

85. What is implied by the term "Official Visitor"?—I take it we are supposed to make a surprise visit two or three times a year, and go through the Home inside and outside—a sort of general inspection.

MARY SMITH examined on oath.

1. *Mr. Russell.*] You are wife of Mr. Smith, Town Clerk, Christchurch?—Yes.

2. You are an Official Visitor to this Home?—Yes, since 1902. I was one of the first three Official Visitors appointed.

3. How often have you been here each year?—When I took up the position I understood it was necessary to make an official visit three or four times a year, but that if there was occasion to go down oftener I was perfectly willing to do so.

4. As a matter of fact, how often have you been here?—Very seldom less than three times a year officially, and I have often been here unofficially.

5. Have you mixed much with the girls?—Yes, both during their work and play.

6. Had they opportunities to make complaints to you if they wanted to do so?—Yes; in fact, on one occasion one or two had been rather troublesome, and had been complaining, and I went into the room and asked them what they had to complain about. I asked them to tell me what the trouble was, but they simply laughed. There were about a dozen present, and they said it was all nonsense.

7. Have they ever complained to you?—Never.

8. Generally, do you find the girls apparently happy?—Yes, decidedly so. I have never seen them depressed.

9. The whole demeanour of the girls has been consistent with happiness?—I should say so.

10. Do you think there is any legitimate cause for complaint so far as the work, food, and general treatment of the girls are concerned?—So far as I can judge, certainly not.

11. Do you think they are overworked?—Certainly not.

12. And they keep in good condition, as though they had food enough?—Most decidedly.

13. Do you think they get time enough for play and recreation?—Yes, and more than they would get if out at service.

14. Putting aside the question of punishment, have you any suggestion to make for the improvement of the Home or the betterment of the children?—Not under existing circumstances, but I may say that as Official Visitor I have urged on the Department the need for better classification.

15. Do you consider from your visits here that there is an upward movement amongst the girls?—Yes, I do.

16. Do you keep in touch with any of the girls after they go out from the Home?—I have with one or two. On one occasion there was a girl in the punishment cell, and I remained behind and had a talk with her. I think I influenced her a little. I asked her if she considered her punishment was deserved, and she said, "Yes, she did." That girl went to service afterwards, and has given very good results. She has greatly improved, and has given every satisfaction as a servant. I would like to say, further, that when the letters appeared in the newspapers the Official Visitors wrote to the Department urging that an inquiry should be held, as we considered it was only fair both to the staff and the children, and to satisfy the public, that the complaints should be seen into. We considered there was nothing whatever to hide.

SARAH JANE MCKEE examined on oath.

1. *Mr. Russell.*] You are a widow, living in Christchurch, and I think you employ the girl Z—— McG——, who lived here?—Yes.

2. When she first came to you, did she speak well or ill of the Matron and the Home?—Very well indeed.

3. And, lately, has any change come over her?—Yes, a very great change lately.

4. In what way?—Before this inquiry began she told me the Matron was very kind to them, and tucked them in bed at night. We had some honey one day, and she said, "Oh; we have plenty of honey at the Home." Another day she said on the subject of fruit, "Oh; we have lots of fruit at the Home." On another day, when tennis and croquet were being played at my place, she said, "We have croquet and tennis at the Home too." I asked her if she played, and she said, "Oh, yes." I asked her if Mrs. Branting would sell fowls, and she said they were all wanted at the Home, and added, "We often get fowls and ducks." She always came to the Home on the Thursdays, and after one visit she told me she had given evidence, and then I understood from the papers she had given her evidence not in the way I expected. I said, "Z——, you told me Mrs. Branting was very good to you," and she replied, "But she never liked me." I asked her how Mrs. Branting showed her she did not like her, but she did not answer me. As to the girl's training, personally she is very clean and very obliging, and does any work she is asked to do; indeed, one day when I saw her going with an axe to chop some wood, I told her not to do it as she might injure herself, but she said she like doing it.

5. You know of no reason why she should suddenly have changed and given the evidence she did?—No; I did not know whether she was insincere to begin with or had changed her mind later on.

6. You were very much surprised when the girl gave evidence contrary to what you expected?—We were all very surprised.