

CHRISTCHURCH.

SIR,—

Department of Labour (Women's Branch), Christchurch, 12th April, 1912.

I have the honour to report on the business done for the year ended 31st March, 1912.

The branch is now firmly established, and the business done appears to have given entire satisfaction to employers and employees, the only difficulty still being the great dearth of domestic workers. I pointed out last year the great hardship this lack of help imposed on all classes of mistresses, especially the working farmers' wives with families, and men coming into meals. It is impossible to exaggerate the condition of these mothers. They are being completely worn out with the burden of work they are called upon to perform, added to the worry and anxiety of rearing their families, and without help of any kind. These people offer good homes and fair wages to respectable, willing girls. Wages would be 15s. to 17s. 6d., and girls in these homes are generally treated as one of the family. We have the same difficulty in town; the cry is always "No girls to be had." Of course, I am referring to generals. There are a few girls seeking employment (about a fifth of the number required), but they mostly want the lighter class of domestic work, such as that of companion-help, housemaid, &c. In fact, these girls very often do not want work at all. In town the hardship is not felt quite so acutely, as the laundry can be sent out, and a woman can sometimes be had by the day, but, nevertheless, it is a very real difficulty in both town and country. It has been said that if girls were better treated by mistresses, and wages and conditions better, more girls would take domestic employment. Experience does not seem to bear this out, as higher wages are paid than formerly, and the conditions are mostly excellent, otherwise the girls will not stay in their positions—they know if they leave a place there are plenty of others waiting for them. Mistresses as well as girls have to be well recommended nowadays. Wages range from 12s. 6d. to £1, for generals; £1 to £1 10s. for cooks (private); housemaids, 15s. to £1; laundresses, £1 to £1 5s., or 5s. a day in laundries; girls to assist, 8s. to 12s.; and so on. Hotel workers obtain higher wages. Women workers are equally hard to obtain for factories, and employers are experiencing equal difficulty in securing enough hands to go on with their orders. Dressmakers also are very much in need of girls, and simply cannot obtain them. The laundries are exceedingly busy, and could do with many more hands. This is accounted for by the fact that many people who cannot get help send their work to the laundries. There have been a number of new arrivals during the last twelve months, but not nearly as many as are required, there being only 117 of them. These workers have expressed great satisfaction with the positions secured for them; also with the wages and general conditions.

The following is a summary of the business done in this office for the last twelve months:—

Applications from Employers.

Generals	...	...	...	...	...	...	1,097
Cooks and cook-generals	...	...	...	...	...	...	472
Housemaids and house-parlour-maids	...	...	...	...	...	...	487
Housekeepers	...	...	...	...	...	...	74
To assist	...	...	...	...	...	...	134
Waitresses	...	...	...	...	...	...	167
Lady-helps	...	...	...	...	...	...	155
Married couples (94)	...	...	...	...	...	...	188
Nurses	...	...	...	...	...	...	106
Kitchen and pantry maids	...	...	...	...	...	...	119
Day-work	...	...	...	...	...	...	53
Laundresses	...	...	...	...	...	...	89
Factory-work	...	...	...	...	...	...	2
Milliners	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Total	...	...	...	...	...	...	3,144

Workers assisted.

Occupation.	Married.	Single.	North Island.	South Island.	Commonwealth.	Great Britain.	Miscellaneous.	Total.
Generals	8	140	17	98	10	23	...	148
Cooks	9	79	12	39	5	31	1	88
Housemaids and household parlour maids	4	91	15	54	4	22	...	95
Housekeepers	4	12	2	12	...	2	...	16
To assist	...	31	...	31	...	...	...	31
Waitresses	1	34	9	21	2	3	...	35
Lady-helps	...	37	1	29	...	7	...	37
Married couples (15)	30	...	4	16	...	10	...	30
Nurses	...	16	2	9	1	4	...	16
Kitchen and parlour maids	5	20	5	17	2	1	...	25
Day-work	11	3	...	11	...	3	...	14
Laundresses	1	6	1	2	...	4	...	7
Factory-workers	...	2	...	...	...	2	...	2
Typistes	...	1	...	...	...	1	...	1
Milliners	...	2	...	...	...	2	...	2
Dressmakers	...	1	...	...	...	1	...	1
Total	73	475	68	339	24	116	1	548