

Margaret Scott, registers the names and requirements of women out of work, or of employers needing assistance. All classes of labour, mental as well as physical, can there be enrolled or applied for, and, although the safety-valve of Government work for those not successful in engagement by private employers cannot be utilised in the case of women, the experiment is likely to prove a success, according to the signs visible at present. Without wishing to interfere with the business of well-conducted private registry-offices, there is plenty of opening for an institution where women and girls without means, or whose small means are too precious to be wasted on high fees, should receive such advice and assistance as the resources of the Labour Department can provide. The effort is at present only tentative and experimental. It is confined to Wellington Provincial District, but, if proved to be successful, will be extended to the other centres of population.

I do not present figures or a detailed report on this subject, as the office has only been open for a few weeks, and does not properly appear in the space of time covered by this paper, but, nevertheless, it should be mentioned as a new departure.

STATE FARMS.

It appeared desirable to the Government that the establishment of labour colonies, or state farms, should not be entered upon in a rash or expensive manner. A single farm of 800 acres was procured at Levin, on the line of the Wellington and Manawatu Railway, and about sixty miles north of the capital city. The experiment has hitherto been confined to a single example, for two reasons: firstly, to test the capability of the Labour Department in Wellington to manage an agricultural community at a distance, and, secondly, to make trial of the quality of the labourers sent, and the utility of their efforts.

I am glad to say that both branches of the inquiry have, in my opinion, borne the test satisfactorily. Little difficulty has been found either in governing the operation from head-quarters or in proving that such establishments may be set up in other places to national advantage. The families and single men sent to the farm have behaved exceptionally well, and have been welcomed in the district. The work done has not only been thoroughly good of its kind, but has been performed at very reasonable rates. The resident families sent a year ago to Levin have tided over in a comfortable manner a time of considerable depression in the labour world, and have been securely isolated from that which to many of them would doubtless have been a period of hardship and dire struggle.

The little settlement on the farm has been, so far as most of the buildings are concerned, of a temporary character only. With the exception of a few acres of open land at one corner, on which the dwellings stand at present, the farm was all in heavy bush, and until this had been fallen and burnt no permanent homesteads could be apportioned. Work has been carried out as far as possible on the co-operative system, lengths of road-making and fencing and areas of bush to be felled being let to small parties of men. Four hundred and forty acres have been felled, burnt, and sown with grass, roads have been formed, fruit- and shelter-trees planted, fences set up, schoolhouse, manager's house, store, stables, &c., erected, timber exported, and many improvements made, which have greatly added to the value of the property. A balance-sheet and a more detailed account of the farm will be found in Mr. Mackay's report, presented herewith.

FACTORIES.

It is a subject of congratulation that the new consolidation measure, "The Factories Act, 1894," has given almost universal satisfaction. Factory-owners throughout the colony speak in terms of high praise concerning the Act, and acknowledge that any little crudeness in the former statute has been mellowed away in its successor, and that their suggestions as to points likely to induce friction have been attended to. On the other hand, employes are largely benefited.

The section compelling the written permit of the Inspector to be conspicuously fastened to the wall of the room in which overtime is being worked is a great safeguard, as formerly the persons employed had only the word or inference of the overseer or forewoman as to the Inspector granting leave. That the Inspector should have full power over permits for overtime is essentially necessary, for the physique and strength which would enable one person or set of persons to work very long hours with impunity may be absent in the case of others. Few trades are entirely healthy; almost every industrial employment has its own particular disease and its own particular drawback. Even shop-assistants suffer from curvature of the spine from too long standing. Overtime-work at all is a thing to be deprecated. It is generally unnecessary and preventible, and I look forward to a time when the general public will be educated highly enough to desist (except under absolute necessity) from rushing to their tradespeople with sudden orders for clothing, &c., when a little forethought for the health and comfort of those employed would dispense with undue haste caused by obedience to some whim of fashion. Overtime-work engenders habits of irregularity, and the small extra money earned is often dearly gained by the draft upon future strength, and by the slackness of employment which results in the relaxation from full tension.

Some of the complaints as to excessive overtime being worked are not to be placed to the account of either the strain of excessive work or the orders of driving employers. These complaints now and then come from parents, who state that their girls have been "kept in" night after night at certain factories. I have proved from repeated observation that overtime was not being worked in these establishments, and fear that the statements as to detention have been made by those who were spending their time in more congenial occupation.

One portion of our factory law in which every colonist should take pride is in its absolute prevention of child-labour. Even with the vast improvement which has taken place in the factory law of Great Britain of late years, the "half-time" system for little children (half-day at school, half-day at work) still continues on its evil way. People in the colonies have not known or have