

LADY HELPS.

A Queer Feature of Domestic Service Which Prevails in New Zealand.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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Wellington, New Zealand.
WANTED—Lady help. Address Private Family, Herald office.
WANTED—Situation as Lady Help or Nurse in a small family. Apply to Miss Mary ——— street, Wellington.
WANTED—By Domesticated Young Lady: position as Companion or Help; town or country. Apply X. O. F., Herald office.

These three advertisements I clip from the "situations wanted" column of the Morning Herald. They give you some idea of one of the distinct professions open to women in New Zealand. This is known as lady helping. The term "lady help" is as common here as "cook" or "chambermaid" is in the United States. It is used as to a certain class of general, and it means that the servant is to be treated as a member of the family.

There are two classes of hired girls in New Zealand. One is the lady help, the other is the general house servant. The lady help does the same work as "the general." She cooks, makes the beds, sweeps the floors, washes and irons and sometimes helps her mistress dress. She is supposed to sit down at the table with the family at meals and to be treated as an assistant of her mistress. She is not classed as a servant, although she is expected to do servant's work and often more than would be demanded of the general house servant.

When I first heard the expression lady help I thought it was one merely expressive of the reign of the servant girl, which now prevails in Australia. I soon found that it had a distinct meaning. To get at the exact difference between a lady help and a "general" servant I inquired of the lady clerk of one of the chief hotels in New Zealand. She replied:

"The chief difference is in the manner of address. You call a 'general' by her first name, such as Polly, Mary or Nellie, but the lady help is always addressed as miss. The mistress is supposed to assist the lady help in doing the house work, but in some families the lady help is treated worse than a scullion. She does all the work of the general servant and receives only half as much wages. I believe in the women advertise for lady help just because they can get them more cheaply."

"But will they work for less wages?" I asked. "I should think they would want more."

"They usually get one-third less than the general house servants," was the reply. "I know some who work for 5 shillings (\$1.25) per week, while general get 10, 12 and 15 shillings and upward. You see the lady help pretends that she has a little better blood and breeding than the general. She wants to rank higher in the social scale, and she pays for it."

LADY HELPS AT DINNER.

I have been much amused at the airs of the New Zealand hired girls. The lady helps in some families are greater snobs for their dignity than any queen upon a throne. They seem to think themselves guests of their mistresses and express their indignation when asked to do what they consider menial things. "One of my helps," said a dear old New Zealand lady to me, "came down to dinner the first night after her engagement in a delectable evening dress. She wore low slippers and had earrings and brooch of paste diamonds. She paid no attention to waiting on the table, and when her master asked her to get up and

hand something from the sideboard she knew very well that she was

Hired Girls vs. Lady Helps.

"How about the ordinary servants?" I asked. "Do they like the lady helps?"

"You mean the general?" said the old lady. "The ordinary hired girl is known as the general house servant and is called the general for short. The general rather despises the lady helps. They feel, and rightly, that they are masquerading under false pretenses. They feel themselves fully the equals of the lady helps, and rather better, as they are not ashamed of being known as doing that for which they are paid. The ordinary general will not allow a lady help in order her about. She will take her directions only from the mistress of the house. I happened to be away from home on one day of last week when some of my men friends called. The lady help received them and played the Lady Bountiful. She entertained them, serving cakes and tea. She rang the bell for the cook, who was a general, and told her to bring in the tea. The cook did so, but when I came home I found her raving. She gave me notice and told me she did not propose to be ordered about by any lady help. I had to almost get down on my knees to keep her. I have her still, but my lady help has been told that she must transmit all orders through me."

WHERE THE SERVANT GIRL RULES.

I find that the servant girl rules here even more omnipotently than in the United States. The mistresses are at the mercy of their servants, who to some extent dictate their own wages and their own hours of work. Every now and then you see an article in the paper which advocates the establishment of an eight-hour law for house servants, and at present every hired girl in New Zealand has one half holiday a week, in addition to Sunday afterwards, and as a usual thing every other Sunday off.

In the country it is almost impossible to get servants and in the towns the servants are leaving to work in the factories, and this notwithstanding the wages in the factories are often less than those of house servants, especially when the matter of board is taken into consideration.

Here are the wages. In the towns general house servants get on the average \$2.50 per week, many receiving as much as \$3.75. Nurse maids are paid from \$1.25 to \$2.50 per week, while landladies receive up to \$4. Cooks are paid from \$3.00 to \$6.00 a week and sewing women in Wellington who live at the house get as high as \$6.00. In other places their wages are lower.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT BUREAUS.

It seems funny to think of a government opening offices to give servants employment, but this is one of the ways of New Zealand. The premier started it some years ago when he found the employment agencies were imposing upon the servant girls. He told me how it happened. Said he:

"I was connected with the department of works at the time. I found that the servant girls were being charged exorbitantly by the employment agencies and that this was one of the ways of New Zealand. The premier started it some years ago when he found the employment agencies were imposing upon the servant girls. He told me how it happened. Said he:

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What a Lady Help is—How the Hired Girl Hates Her—Her Curious Antics—All About Servants' Wages and Servants' Rights—The Weekly Half Holiday and the Sundays Off—The Government Employment Bureau—New Zealand's Factory System and How Sweat Shops are Prevented—Factory Girls and How They are Treated—Singlesladies are Barmalods—Woman's Suffrage in New Zealand and What It Did for the Working Classes.

partment of labor as made by the woman inspector of factories and the woman who is in charge of the woman's branch here at Wellington. The latter states that 246 girls have been given places during the past year. It also gives the following points as to how servants should be treated in order to make them efficient. It suggests that mothers should work with their daughters, and that they should work with them. It advises mistresses to work with their servants somewhat as follows:

"A mistress who has but one servant should work with her during the morning hours. Under such circumstances a girl will become very proficient and by this means domestic matters will move along on oiled wheels. The mistress does nothing to help her servant, and is always hurrying her wears the girl out. It is she who brings domestic service into bad repute, she who is driving the girls into the factories."

"I find that servants are becoming more scarce every year. Even the old women who used to be a trouble to the office have found employment, nearly all of them in the country. I find that some girls engage places and then do not go to them. They perhaps find something better in the meanwhile and break their engagements. I would suggest that the government provide fines for such offenses, as they cause great inconvenience to employers. As it is now if an employer fails to take a girl after he has engaged her he has to give her a week's pay."

This is the statement of Helen Staveley, officer in charge of the woman's branch of the labor department at Wellington.

HOW FACTORY GIRLS ARE TREATED.

The New Zealand government has a woman inspector of factories connected with its labor bureau. This is Margaret Scott Hawthorne. It is her business to visit the shops, factories, and work rooms where women are employed and see that the laws concerning them are carried out. The head of the department of labor has given me her last report, from which I condense a few statements. She says:

"The question of forty-eight hours per week is still a matter of bitter complaint. In many factories half an hour only is given for lunch, and if the women take a half hour off in the middle of the day they have to work a half hour in the evening to make up their forty-eight hours per week."

"I find that women and girls employed in the shops and factories work harder than men's people imagine. A regular hour for closing should be adopted. Many of the girls are quite done at 4 p. m. when the tea time comes and are not fit for another hour and a half's work. Some clerks are affected by the draughts from the doors opening. I would suggest that in winter swinging doors be fitted to all shops. I think eight hours a day is quite long enough for work in such places."

The factory girls are better protected in New Zealand than in the United States. Take the southern cotton factories, for instance. Many of the employees there work eleven hours a day. In New Zealand women and children are forbidden by law to put in more than fifty-two hours a week, and every week must have its half holiday exclusive of Sunday. Nearly all the factories are closed at 1 p. m. Saturday. A fixed time for dinner is provided by law. One factory that cut short the dinner hour was recently fined. Such cases are common, and wherever discovered are punished by the government.

AGAINST SWEAT SHOPS.

The New Zealand government has laws against the sweat shops. It defines a factory as any place where more than two hands are employed.

and this brings all kinds of little shops under the factory laws. It provides that girls shall not work in the factories without wages. It was discovered that some of the factories or stores would take on girls for the first three months for nothing, telling them that they were not working in the factories, but that they would be paid as soon as they became experienced. At the end of the three months they would likely say to the girls that they were worth nothing and could give them no further employment. They would then take on a fresh lot on the same terms. By the laws it is now provided that no employee must be paid less than a certain sum, and that girls under eighteen cannot work in any kind of an establishment for less than \$1 per week. If girls are taken into the factories at an earlier age than this they must show that they have some education. No girl under fifteen will be admitted to a factory without the consent of the board of the fourth grade of the public schools.

The law provides that all factories shall have proper sanitary arrangements. The buildings must be well ventilated, be protected with fire escapes, and so arranged that the women can have the necessary privacy as to many things.

SOME SPECIMEN FINES.

These labor laws are by no means dead letters. Employers are fined when ever they transgress them. I have just been looking over a list of cases which illustrate this. One man who cut short the dinner hour of his girls paid \$10 and costs, and another, a restaurant keeper, who kept his waitresses at work for 11½ hours one day had to pay a fine of \$36, although one of the girls had had three afternoons off that week. Another restaurant man was fined \$7.50 and costs for employing his waitresses fifty-two hours per week, and another was fined for not allowing one of his females an hour for her meals.

In the town of Napier a man who employed females for more than fifty-two hours in one week, and another who was fined \$40. This man kept a store. His average time at fifty-two hours per week was less than nine hours a day. I wonder how many of our merchants girls at work for more than nine hours a day.

SALESWOMEN AND BARMALDS.

And this brings me to the question of salesladies. The laws of New Zealand provide that every saleslady shall have a weekly half holiday. They provide that the girls must have seats in the stores and must be allowed to use them. I have before me cases of merchants who were fined for not providing such seats, and this is so both in the stores and in the barmalods.

The saloons here are called public houses or hotels, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the liquors are served out by women. The prettier the face the bigger the wages, and the more charming the barmald the greater the custom. In many of the hotels the barmalds do not work more than eight or nine hours. The government gives them their half holiday, and the hotel keepers are fined if they do not see that they take it. This matter of the half holiday is rigidly kept, and I have instances of fines for the delivering of goods or bread on a half holiday.

There is one more case of a baker who kept his own daughters working all night at one time. The government inspectors heard of it. They arrested him and charged him \$5 for each girl and warned him that on the next offense the fine would be raised to \$20. The government regulates all sorts of things as to women's work. It objects to females being worked in gangs at such hours as will necessitate their going home at night. The chief of the labor bureau recently reported that he found a factory in which one set of

girls was put on from 8 to 11 a. m., and then taken off until 1. They were worked from 1 until 5 and again from 7 to 9, making altogether nine full hours. Another gang of girls was worked from 10 until 1, from 3 until 7 and from 9 until 11.