

Britain; 805 were sent to private employment and 335 to Government works. The completion of the Otago Central Railway works and the circumscribed facilities for employing only a limited number of co-operative workers on the other provincial railway construction-works have somewhat seriously inconvenienced a number of men who for years had found employment on these works. Fortunately other channels of occupation of a semi-public character were opened up, and large numbers of men whose services had been dispensed with from the works mentioned found suitable employment at the ruling rates of wages in the district. Taken as a whole the year has been signally free from any grave difficulty appertaining to the finding of employment for this class of labour.

FACTORIES.

For the year 1,050 factories have been registered, employing 10,264 operatives—viz., 7,048 males and 3,216 females, an increase of 37 factories and 366 workers. 1,877 women and persons under sixteen years of age have worked 54,829 hours overtime, and 940 males over sixteen years of age have worked 107,565 hours overtime during the year.

Four hundred and thirty-six certificates have been issued to persons under sixteen years of age, as required by sections 26 and 27 of "The Factories Act, 1901,"—viz., 203 males and 233 females.

One hundred and forty-two accidents have been reported this year, five of which ended fatally; two of these cases were of men engaged at degalvanising wire netting used in connection with the manufacture of concrete and drainpipes. They inhaled the poisonous fumes, with fatal results. Two others were killed in a quarry, through a charge going off that had missed fire the previous day. The strange part of it was that the two men who were drilling out the charge escaped with very slight injuries, whilst the two persons killed were loading drays, and were buried with the *débris* from the explosion. The fifth death was caused through the man slipping and falling whilst carrying tramway-rails at the gasworks, spraining himself in such a manner as led to strangulation of the intestines; another somewhat serious accident to a young man occurred in a biscuit and confectionery works. This youth went to put the driving-belt on the pulley whilst the machinery was in motion, when the belting struck his left leg, breaking it so badly that it had to be amputated at the knee. There was also a rather serious accident at a brush and broom factory: an employee was working at a shaping-machine (which was remarkably well guarded, there being only about a quarter of an inch of open space beyond the room required for the shape and the back of the brush to get on to the knives); it is supposed that he put the end of the wood, instead of the side, on to the knives, which caused the wood and shape to fly up, throwing his right hand on to the knives of the machine, with the result that he lost the two last fingers together with the outside part of the hand near to the wrist. He was considered to be an exceedingly careful man. The other 135 accidents were comparatively slight, consisting of burns, bruises, injuries to the eye, and so forth. In every case careful investigation was made, and everything was done to prevent and minimise the source of danger in every instance. Except in cases where the employees did not make known their accidents (in some instances for several days) the accidents were reported most promptly.

There were two convictions under the Act, and one dismissal.

The sanitary conditions of some of the factories have not undergone much change, due in a great measure to the unfinished condition of the comprehensive drainage scheme now in progress. There is every reason to believe that before the end of next year a large area of these local works will be completed, and the water system substituted for the present earthen closets (now so much in use).

Many new dining-rooms, nicely furnished, have been provided, fire-escapes erected, and the provisions in relation to sanitation generally have been well observed.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACTS.

There has been very little difficulty in enforcing the provisions of these Acts. What has given us most trouble has been to get shopkeepers in excepted shops to reconcile the provisions of section 3, subsection (1), clause (a), of the amendment of 1905, with the schedule of hours assistants in these shops must cease work. It has been my duty again and again to impress upon these shopkeepers that the hours fixed by the said schedule, where later than 9 p.m., apply (with a few exceptions) to male assistants only, and that the second paragraph of clause (a) governs the hour—viz., 9 p.m.—at which female assistants must finish their daily duties. A thorough inspection has been made of all the shops where female assistants are employed, and the lady Inspector has satisfied herself that proper and satisfactory sitting-accommodation has been provided, and the statutory wages paid. The annual returns show that there are 1,159 shopkeepers in this district, employing 2,257 males and 799 females. There were 8 convictions for breaches of this Act, and 4 dismissals.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACTS.

In the administration of these Acts we have met with similar excuses for offences that are characteristic of the average respondent in enforcement cases—viz., ignorance of the provisions of the awards and industrial agreements under which they were working. There is, without doubt, a great deal of carelessness in this respect; a little more attention to the important clauses of these awards would minimise considerably the number of cases that come before the Court for enforcement.

Thirty-four breaches were decided by the Court. Seventeen of these cases were conducted by the Assistant Inspector, who is a very assiduous, prudent, and painstaking officer. There are also 58 informations for breaches of awards and industrial agreements awaiting the attention of the Court.