

Biscuit and confectionery making has been very busy, and a good deal of overtime was necessary in order to cope with orders.

Other industries such as brushmaking, matchmaking, condiment, patent medicine, and jewellery manufacturing have all been busy, and there has been no loss of time through slackness.

Furniture-manufacturing has been busy in all branches, and there have been no tradesmen idle.

Unskilled labour: This class of worker has also been better employed than for several years past; at no period has there been any great difficulty experienced in finding employment for those anxious to avail themselves of it. There have been times when the names of men who could not be placed were on the books, and at the same time there were vacant positions which could not be filled, but these are the ordinary difficulties experienced in every labour bureau; in the main the employment branch has been able either to place most of the applicants or to advise them where to get employment.

FACTORIES ACT.

The requirements of this Act have, on the whole, been well observed by employers, and, although in several instances fairly large sums of money had to be expended by manufacturers or owners to bring workrooms into conformity with its provisions as regards fire-escapes, ventilation, and sanitary improvements, very few have demurred. Of all the labour laws, this is the most thoroughly understood, consequently there is less friction in its administration.

All factories have been visited, and very few irregularities discovered either in regard to working-hours, wages, or other conditions. On the contrary, improvements were noticeable in many factories. In addition to the factories in the local district, several in the country districts were visited.

The number of factories registered was 1,153, employing 10,001 persons—viz., 6,503 males and 3,496 females. There were also personally engaged in the factories as employers, managers, and others, 1,183 males and 188 females. These figures show a decrease of 3 in the number of factories. Of the males 285 and of the females 321 were under sixteen years of age.

Overtime.—The number of hours of overtime worked by boys under sixteen years of age and women totalled 91,896. This shows an advance of 6,045 hours on last year's figures. The principal trades working overtime were:—

	Persons.	Hours.
Biscuit and confectionery	208	9,715
Clothing-manufacturing	604	33,326
Dressmaking and millinery	376	8,381
Printing and bookbinding	172	7,964
Shirt-making	200	4,593
Woollen-milling	147	10,698

Permits to Young Persons.—Four hundred and nine certificates of fitness to work in factories were issued during the year—viz., 158 to boys and 251 to girls. This is an increase of 37 on last year.

Prosecutions.—Five cases for infringements of the Act were taken during the year, but in no case is there call for special mention. Conviction was obtained in each instance, and penalties and costs totalling £5 were imposed; while in eleven other instances where breaches of a trivial nature were discovered warnings were given without recourse to the Court.

In the interests of public health it was found necessary to send notices to two bakers that their premises would not be again registered as factories, and sufficient notice was given to allow them to obtain other suitable premises. In all matters pertaining to sanitation I have had the willing assistance of Mr. Cameron, of the Public Health Department, and his services have been much appreciated.

Accidents.—There were 122 accidents reported during the year. These were all fully inquired into, and all necessary information and advice given to the injured workers. The most serious was the loss of the greater portion of a thumb in a circular saw. In no instance were accidents attributable to faulty or insufficient guarding of machinery.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

During the year 1,396 shops were registered, in which 1,674 males and 1,041 females were employed, making a total of 2,715. In addition to these, there are 1,168 male and 397 female occupiers engaged in the various businesses. Compared with last year's returns, this shows an increase of 71 shops and 82 assistants.

Thirty-one breaches of the Act were discovered, and 22 prosecutions were instituted. Penalties and costs amounting to £24 9s. were imposed. In 9 cases a warning was given that repetition of the offence would be followed by prosecution. The sum of £18 5s. 3d., arrears of wages, was recovered, and paid to the workers interested.

Overtime.—557 assistants worked 7,460 hours overtime. This shows an increase of 653 hours as compared with last year's returns.

Inspection.—The shops have all been visited by Inspectors, and very little cause for complaint was found. The most frequent difficulty was with the comparatively small shopkeeper for not keeping his wages and time book properly entered. This is generally due to carelessness or pressure of business, but it is calculated to lead to trouble if the warnings given are not heeded; otherwise there has been very little trouble with the majority of shopkeepers in the observance of the Act.

Complaints are frequently made by employers of labour in regard to those employing no labour remaining open at night after the other shops are closed, and I believe that an amend-