

convictions were for selling adulterated milk, twenty-four for selling light-weight bread, and twelve for selling light-weight butter. During the year 1917, 2,655 analyses were made by the Department's Analysts, 2,456 being milk-samples. Samples of bread to the number of 3,925 were weighed, and of these 160 were found to be short-weight.

The total fines and costs were legal proceedings resulted from sampling or weighing amounted to £1,412 15s. 11d. for the year.

Regulations have been gazetted which, while still prohibiting the importation into New Zealand of brandy, whisky, or rum of a less strength than 25 per cent. under proof, and prohibiting the sale in bottles and jars of these spirits at a less strength, allow the spirits in question to be sold otherwise at a strength of not less than 35 per cent. The object of these regulations was to prevent inferior brands being dumped in New Zealand from other countries in which the regulations differ from ours, and to ensure that the dilution permissible under the regulations is done in New Zealand, so that in view of the limited shipping-space freight should not be incurred on added water.

The data furnished under the Sale of Food and Drugs Act year by year pleasantly demonstrate the increasing steps being taken to maintain the standards for food-stuffs. The possibility of short-weight practices being adopted to secure greater profits in these war-times caused steps to be taken to make sure that the foods of the breakfast-table— if it may so be put— were sold true to the weight asked for, expected, and paid for by the purchaser. It is satisfying to be able to report that no general evidences of this means of increasing the cost of living were demonstrated.

QUACKERY PREVENTION ACT.

The preventive steps from time to time taken under this Act make clear the need for something more of the nature of a comprehensive crusade against all "cure-alls" and other more or less fraudulent medicaments than the taking of action against individual quack remedies. A movement in the aforesaid direction will be taken in hand so soon as existing pressure on the medical staff from other causes is relieved.

POISONS ACT.

That nothing really effective can be hoped for in the administration of an Act over forty years old and never in any way brought into line with the modern needs of the Dominion, must be self-evident. Attempts in recent past sessions of Parliament have been made to bring about not only a more businesslike measure, but also—what is still more the essence of a Poisons Act— means by which the sale of potent poisons may be reserved to the fewest possible persons under stringent conditions. There is no value whatever in a Poisons Act if the sources through which homicidal poisons can be obtained are multiplied beyond reason. There must be restriction of sale, or, better perhaps, no Act at all, for then a false sense of security would be removed.

VENEREAL DISEASE AND THE SOCIAL HYGIENE ACT.

Little progress has been made by the Department in the administration of the above Act owing to the fact that the Act is deficient in its machinery clauses. This requires to be remedied this session by an amendment to cover such matters as are outside the scope of regulations under the present Act.

PLUMBERS REGISTRATION ACT, 1912.

Four meetings of the Plumbers' Board constituted under the above Act were held during the year.

The Board held examinations under the Act in June and December, 1917. Ninety-three candidates presented themselves, the result being as follows: Seven candidates qualified in the theoretical part, thirteen in the practical part, and thirty qualified or completed in both parts of the examination and were duly granted registration. In addition, one other plumber was admitted to registration during the year under section 7 (1) (c) of the Act.

To date, the names of 1,249 have been entered in the register. Out of this total twenty-seven names have been removed—fourteen through death in civilian life, and thirteen through death on active service.

During the year 920 pocket certificates of registration have been issued.

MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS ACT.

Three meetings of the Medical Board constituted under this Act were held during the year, and registration was granted to twenty-nine applicants, twenty-three of whom were recent graduates of the New Zealand University, and the remainder qualified men from overseas. The Board declined registration to one applicant on the ground that he was not of good fame or character, and an appeal to the Supreme Court by the applicant against the Board's decision was not sustained. Two other applications for registration were declined on the ground that the qualifications of the applicants did not entitle them to registration.

The shortage of medical practitioners is still felt, especially in outlying districts. About one-third of the medical men practising in New Zealand are engaged, either at the front or in New Zealand, entirely on military duties. The result has been, for example, that a local medical association has had to offer as much as £1,000 a year in an endeavour to induce a medical man to settle in its district. As regards the more settled districts the difficulty has been overcome by an arrangement between the Director-General of Medical Services and the Chief Health Officer, under which the former does not call up any medical man if the latter is of opinion that he cannot be spared from his district, until arrangements have been made temporarily to fill such practitioner's place. This arrangement prevented serious dislocation of the medical service of New Zealand, and has ensured as little inconvenience as possible to the civilian population.