

Breaches of the Factories Act.

There were 141 convictions for breaches of the Act, and 9 cases brought were dismissed. They call for little comment, and were fewer than in the previous year. There is very little trouble experienced under this Act by Inspectors of Factories, and few cases occur except in the large towns, where there may always be found a few persons who wish to pit their own smartness against the administration of the law.

Permits.

Permits to work in factories were granted to 1,268 youths and 1,271 girls between fourteen and sixteen years of age. A statement, in detail, will be found at the end of this report.

SCAFFOLDING INSPECTION ACT.

This Act is now in thorough working-order, and its provisions are very generally known to builders and others immediately affected. A close supervision is kept on all scaffolding, and it is pleasing to report that the requirements of our Inspectors are acceded to with little or no demur. Fully detailed reports by the Inspectors are given in this report.

During the year there were 87 accidents reported under the Act, 3 of which proved fatal. These fatalities were not caused through any defects in the scaffolding. In one instance a stonemason was instantaneously killed by a heavy stone falling on him. In another case a plumber's apprentice fell on his back, and subsequently died of kidney-disease brought on by the fall. The other case was more serious. A number of men were working on a building in course of erection, when the roof collapsed, one man sustaining injuries from which he subsequently died. Several others were seriously injured.

The following table shows particulars regarding the accidents in the different districts :—

District.			Slight.	Moderate.	Serious.	Fatal.
Auckland ..	..	..	16	6	1	..
Wellington ..	..	..	25	12	..	1
Canterbury ..	..	..	3	3	..	1
Taranaki ..	..	..	2	..	..	..
Dunedin ..	..	..	8	7	1	1
			—	—	—	—
Totals ..	..	..	54	28	2	3

The Inspectors have been kept very busy during the year ; for example, in Auckland 1,344 visits were made, and in Wellington, as the result of 900 examinations, alterations or additions were ordered in 240 cases, while in 35 the scaffolding was condemned and the men warned off it. There appears to be one point that should certainly be made clear either by statute or by regulations—viz., on which of several subcontractors in a large undertaking should responsibility for maintaining scaffolding, &c., rest ? One set of men—say, bricklayers—having finished their part of the work by aid of the scaffolding, leave altogether ; perhaps weeks or months afterwards plasterers use the scaffolding for their work. The subcontractor for the plastering-work objects, in case of accident, or on being charged for repairs, to consider himself responsible for the scaffolding which he did not erect. Probably it is the principal contractor who should be responsible for the upkeep and due maintenance of all scaffolding, &c., but at present the point is not clear. All Inspectors note the danger arising from rope rails, and wish rods or iron pipes substituted.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

There is presented in Table 4 of this report a much fuller and more exhaustive account of the business done in shops than on any previous occasion. The numbers of shops, employers, employees (male and female, classified to ages), wages paid, &c., are shown in the table in the separate and distinct trades to which they belong. The table will be found to be of great interest to those who are concerned with the distribution of goods in retail trade.

Still more interesting is the following table. It discloses the numbers of employers, employees, shops, and wages in the different industrial districts.