

Department will shortly be enabled to collect data relative to the occupations to which boys and girls leaving school go, and, as has been previously indicated in this report, to suggest means whereby many of them may be diverted from "blind-alley" occupations to channels where they will be enabled to acquire a knowledge of useful trades.

ACCIDENTS IN FACTORIES.

—					Slight.	Moderate.	Serious.	Fatal.	Total.
1910-11	..	..	..	..	638	145	77	12	872
1911-12	..	..	..	..	792	167	50	11	1,020
1912-13	..	..	..	..	837	84	32	8	961
1913-14	..	..	..	..	879	165	52	8	1,104
1914-15	..	..	..	..	747	171	46	3	967

The proportion of reported accidents to workers engaged in factories was 10·88 per thousand, which is much less than for the previous year (which was 12·61).

Fortunately there have been only three fatal accidents during the period, whilst the average for each of the four previous years was ten. The particulars relating to these fatal accidents are as follow: Meatworks employee: Death due to amputation of right arm, which had been smashed in a revolving electric fan. Brewery worker: Electrocuted by an electric torch which he had been using while cleaning out a vat. Woodworker: Abdominal injuries, received while working a circular saw.

SHOPS AND OFFICES ACT.

The provisions of the Act have been generally well observed, as is evidenced by the fact shown below—that the number of prosecutions found necessary has diminished since last year by more than one-half.

The provisions of the 1913 amendment to the Act requiring heating-appliances in shops, and also prescribing more particularly the sitting-accommodation that should be provided for females in shops, have been given attention, and no doubt many shop-assistants have already this winter felt the benefits of the amendment.

A considerable number of complaints by employers—particularly grocers—have been made in regard to what they describe as the too severe restriction upon the working of overtime. The Act at present provides that permits to work overtime must be obtained from an Inspector beforehand, and shall be granted only for "stocktaking or other special work not being the actual sale of goods." The overtime is further restricted to thirty nights of three hours each in a year. Prior to 1911 the provisions of the Act in this respect were subject to awards of of the Arbitration Court, which in the case of grocers made special provision for overtime during the busy periods. It is claimed on behalf of the employers that similar provision should be made to that in respect of overtime in factories—viz., that permits be not required for males over, say, sixteen, and that for such persons occupiers should not be limited to thirty nights (or ninety hours) in the year; but that overtime rates should be paid in all cases.

PROSECUTIONS.

The following statement shows the number and nature of the prosecutions under the Act during the year:—

Failing to close in terms of requisition by which the hours are fixed by a majority of shopkeepers	..	..	..	..	..	33
Failing to close on statutory half-holiday	..	..	..	..	..	23
Failing to keep a wages and time book	..	..	..	..	..	19
Miscellaneous offences	..	..	..	..	..	40

Convictions were obtained in 103 of the cases. It is pleasing to be able to report that there is a considerable decrease in the number taken this year (115) as compared with the previous period (252).