

As indirectly bearing upon crime, I think it necessary to bring under your notice the difficulty the police have to contend with in dealing with larrikinism. The public are constantly complaining of the growth of this nuisance, but no enlargement of the powers of the police has ever been given to enable them to deal successfully with it. In most cases of the kind the police have to proceed by summons; and when, as usually happens, an offender is fined a few shillings, perhaps a month after the offence has been committed, the effect on the larrikin mind is to breed contempt of the whole proceedings and a greater disregard of the laws of the country. Besides, the larrikin usually gives a false name to the constable when found committing an offence, and so screens himself from any penalty whatever. Could he be arrested in every case, when found offending, he would learn to look upon constables with a very different eye, and less would be heard of larrikinism.

I would beg to point out that in Australia, wherever two constables are stationed together, one of them holds the rank of senior constable and receives sixpence per day extra, and wears one stripe upon the arm. It seems to me a great advantage would be gained by the introduction of such a system here. When two constables are posted together, neither wearing a stripe, nor bearing a recognised rank, the discipline of the Force must assuredly suffer, as one cannot well speak to the other with a voice of authority.

Considerable improvements have lately been made in the district stations, which have been much neglected in years past, but further improvements are still required to place the stations in a proper state of repair. The Government property in the district is in fair order, and the horses sound and in good condition.

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As regards crime, there has been very little change in the number of cases reported in the more serious crimes, there being a slight increase in some and a slight falling off in others. The offence calling for most attention is that of assault on girls of a tender age. In one case the police successfully prosecuted a man for committing rape on his daughter, aged fifteen years, at Kinloch, and an exemplary sentence of fifteen years' penal servitude was passed on him; also another man was successfully prosecuted for attempted rape on a girl of seven years at Dunedin, and sentenced to five years' penal servitude; while another was also prosecuted for a similar offence on a girl of thirteen years at Thornbury, but after a trial lasting three days was acquitted. A man, for rape on his step-daughter, aged thirteen, at Invercargill, is now awaiting his trial at the next sittings of the Supreme Court; while another has been committed for trial at Clinton, for indecent assault on two girls of tender years. A man was also committed for trial on a private prosecution for indecent assault on a little girl at Gore; but, in this case, the grand jury, at the recent Supreme Court sittings at Dunedin, threw out the bill, there being little or no evidence. In this last case the police declined to prosecute, owing to the extreme weakness of the evidence. The only other case calling for attention is that of a charge of murder by stabbing, at South Dunedin, on the evening of Christmas Day last. In this case a verdict of manslaughter was returned by the jury. In regard to charges of drunkenness, there has been a decrease of 102, while the decrease in the number of all cases reported during the past year, compared with the previous year, is 99, drunkenness thus accounting for the decrease.

The police have been very successful in the enforcement of the Licensing Act, both as regards hotelkeepers and sly grog-sellers; but I am sorry to say that, as far as regards hotelkeepers, there is a strong disinclination on the part of many members of the Force to carry out the provisions of the Act. This I attribute to the great length of time they have been stationed here without change, thus causing a friendship to grow up between the publicans and those members of the Force.

In regard to other matters, there is nothing particularly requiring comment. As a whole the Police have fairly done their duty, both as regards police and the numerous other duties which they are called upon to perform. The station-buildings are all in fair order, and affording good accommodation to the members of the Force occupying them, with the exception of Cromwell and Waitahuna, both of which require enlarging.

There has been one death during the year, and two discharges on compensation through failure of health; otherwise the men have been comparatively healthy.

A police-station was re-opened at Ravensbourne on the 19th of June last.

In conclusion, I may add that twelve constables underwent ten days' gun-drill at Tairaroa Heads in the months of November and December last.

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