

provided with comfortable quarters, with fuel and light, and have a good cheap mess; but the married men, I submit, are labouring under many disadvantages. The rents are very high in Wellington, and, in order to enable men with families to obtain a dwelling, they are compelled to live long distances from the central station, which detracts very much, in my opinion, from their efficiency. I am aware that many of them, what with high house-rent and paying their life-insurance premiums, have a hard struggle to support their families and to keep themselves in a condition to fit them physically for the arduous duties they have to perform.

As you are no doubt aware, great improvements are being effected in the training and condition generally of the Police Forces in nearly all parts of the United Kingdom and America. It is recently becoming more fully recognised, both in the army and Police Forces, that comfortable homes, with proper training, and a reasonable rate of pay, mean increased efficiency, and in the end economy. I therefore earnestly ask for consideration on behalf of the married members of the Force.

INSPECTOR J. PRATT, NELSON AND WESTLAND.

In compliance with Circular No. 18, of the 2nd April, I have the honour to furnish the annual report *re* Nelson and Westland Police District.

The police strength on 31st March was as follows: One Inspector, one sergeant-major, four sergeants, thirty-two constables, and two district constables, being a decrease of one constable since last annual report, but this vacancy—Seddonville Station—will, I trust, soon be filled.

During the year the following changes have been effected: One resignation, one discharge on compensation, one second-class constable promoted to first-class constable, and one third-class constable promoted to second-class constable.

On the whole, there has been an increase of fifty in the number of offences reported, as compared with the year 1895, but most of the offences are not of a very serious nature.

Thefts from tail-races appear in the same number—four—as in last report, but only one conviction was secured. Unless a tail-race robber is caught red-handed it is hard to obtain a conviction, for the gold stolen cannot be identified.

There has been an increase of no less than sixteen in the number of lunatics, and I am unable to offer any explanation on that score.

Slight increases occur in the following offences: Abusive and threatening language, arson, assaults, false pretences, forgery, gaming offences, illegally on premises, malicious injury to property, obscene and profane language, and rape.

Drunkenness shows a decrease of nineteen, and is not a prevailing vice on the Coast, as any stranger who has visited the large public gatherings, such as races, sports-meetings, &c., could not avoid noticing the absence of drunken individuals. Perhaps the decrease may in a small extent be due to money not being so plentiful as in bygone years, but I am of opinion that the working-classes as a whole are now more saving. And this fact is brought into prominence in mining centres on pay-night: in former days miners were wont to carouse on these occasions, whereas at the present time there is a total absence of anything of the kind on pay-nights.

There is also a decrease in the number of offences that might be classed as the acts of larrikins, and larrikinism, although not unknown, is not so prevalent as in other parts of the colony.

Sly-grog selling is not carried on to any extent, although five convictions for this offence were obtained during the year.

I am happy to say that, as in the past, offences of a serious nature are few and far between.

The police buildings at some stations are in need of repairs and alterations, and I have already furnished a special report dealing with this matter.

I beg to bring under your notice the fact that, owing to the recent mining operations on the Papatōa Range, it is probable that ere long a large number of men will be employed, and I would respectfully suggest that steps be taken with a view of opening a station at Blackball Township. At present all police work at Blackball and the surrounding district is done by the constable stationed at Ahaura, and a good deal of expense in the way of travelling-expenses is incurred in the course of a year. Another portion of the district—Barrytown, some twenty miles north of Grey-mouth—has also been brought into prominence of late owing to capital being invested in mining speculations, and if projected works are carried out additional police supervision will be required.

The conduct of members of the Force has, on the whole, been good, and the numerous extra duties have been faithfully performed.

INSPECTOR T. BROHAM, CHRISTCHURCH AND NORTH OTAGO.

In compliance with the request contained in circular memorandum of the 2nd April, I have the honour to report upon the state of this district for the year ended the 31st March, 1897.

The statistics of crime for the year ended the 31st December, 1896, were forwarded to your office on the 6th March. They show that for that year 3,089 offences of various kinds were reported to the police, and 2,912 persons were taken into custody or proceeded against by summons. In the year ended the 31st December, 1895, 2,743 offences were reported, and 2,559 persons were taken into custody or otherwise proceeded against.

It thus appears that during 1896 there was an increase of 346 in the total number of cases reported, as compared with 1895, and an increase of 353 in the number of arrests, &c., made. The following are the offences in which the largest increase has occurred: Common assaults, arrests, 163, being an increase of 29 on the arrests for the previous year: assaults on the police, 23, an increase of 13: breach of the peace, 61; increase, 13: deserting wives and families, offences