

A number of promotions have been made during the year which have had an excellent effect on the Force generally; two constables have been promoted to the rank of sergeant, one to that of detective, and numerous other sergeants and constables have been promoted a step in their grade.

The detectives have been successful in coping with crime, and very few offences of any consequence have gone undetected. One detective has been promoted from second-class to first-class.

The Offence Return for the year 1897 shows an increase of offences reported, as compared with 1896, of 348, the numbers respectively being 3,518 and 3,170; of this increase drunkenness contributes 152. The remaining increase is divided among serious and lesser offences such as may be looked for as population increases.

There has been a notable decrease in the number of cattle- and sheep-stealing cases reported.

There were twenty-four less cases of wife and family desertion in 1897 than in 1896.

A particularly cruel murder took place in the Silverstream district in September last. On the 7th of that month a bushman named Frank Philpott murdered his mate, Ernest Alfred Hawthorne, and buried him in the bush close to the camp where they were employed wood-cutting. Hawthorne's disappearance was first reported to the police on the 6th of November, and immediate search was made for his body, which was found on the 12th. Philpott, who was apprehended on the 2nd of November on a charge of forgery, was charged with the murder, and after very careful investigation by the police the offence was brought home to him. He was tried at the February sittings of the Supreme Court here,—the trial lasting nine days,—found guilty, sentenced to death, and was executed at the Terrace Gaol on the 23rd of March, having previously confessed his guilt. The detective and other members of the Force employed in the case displayed great energy and zeal in collecting the evidence, &c., and were granted rewards for their successful efforts.

Serious cases of larrikinism are, I am glad to say, not at all rife in Wellington.

The Infant Life Protection Act works very well. The matron, who is very zealous in the discharge of her duties, has assisted very materially in making the provisions of the Act a success.

High rents and the consequent difficulty experienced by married members of the Force in obtaining houses convenient to the police-stations, in my opinion, has a very detrimental effect on the general efficiency of the Force.

The city and suburbs of Wellington are making rapid progress in wealth and population, about 425 buildings have been erected in the city during the year, the shipping accommodation has been found insufficient for the increasing trade of the Port, and the Harbour Board have initiated an extensive scheme of further wharf accommodation, which I understand will be proceeded with shortly.

A short time since the Harbour Board applied for a second constable to be constantly employed about the wharves; at present three constables are employed on this duty, each performing eight hours work, and there can be no doubt that before long three more constables will have to be told off for this duty alone.

In the Mount Cook sub-district the work increases fast, and, in my opinion, another constable must very shortly be stationed on the Adelaide Road.

After careful consideration I have come to the conclusion that ten additional constables are required at Wellington to make the Force as efficient as it should be, and to meet the growing requirements of the place.

#### INSPECTOR J. CULLEN, NELSON AND WESTLAND.

In compliance with circular No. 9/98, of the 12th April last, I have the honour to furnish the annual report in connection with the Nelson and Westland Police District.

The strength of the district on the 31st March last was as follows—viz.: six sergeants, thirty-three constables, and two district constables, being an increase of one sergeant and one constable since date of furnishing last annual report.

During the year the following changes have been effected—viz.: Appointments, two constables; discharged on compensation, one constable; deaths, Inspector J. Pratt and Sergeant-major S. Moore.

The number of offences reported during the year 1897 amounted to 644, being a decrease of sixty-nine as compared with the year 1896. Most of the offences reported were of a trivial character, and those of a serious nature, though not absolutely unknown, are of rare occurrence. Offences that might be classified as the work of "larrikins" are not numerous. The number of cases of drunkenness increased by twenty-six, and is due to the large number of strangers, labourers, who, from time to time, have been employed on works in connection with the recent developments in mining properties. Sly-grog selling, though no doubt carried on in some outlying portions of the district on a very small scale, shows a decrease on the previous year.

During the latter portion of 1897 and the first month in the present year numerous fires, no doubt the work of a fire-raising fiend, occurred in Reefton, and although extra police assistance was obtained the delinquent was not discovered. One arrest was effected, but the evidence forthcoming was not sufficient to obtain a conviction.

As I have only been in the district for a period of about three months since the date of my assuming charge, I have not had many opportunities of visiting the outside stations, &c., but so far as I can judge, I consider the conduct of the members of the Force, as a whole, has been good, and the numerous duties have been faithfully performed.

#### INSPECTOR T. BROHAM, CHRISTCHURCH AND NORTH OTAGO.

In accordance with the request contained in Circular No. 9 of the 12th April, 1898, I have the honour to report upon the state of this district for the past year.