

SECOND-HAND DEALERS.

The Second-hand Dealers Act of last session supplies a long-felt want. It is too early to speak definitely upon the measure, but already benefit has accrued, and it promises to answer the purposes for which it was intended.

“INFANT LIFE PROTECTION ACT, 1896.”

During the year there were 583 registered homes throughout the colony, representing 936 infants, against 565 homes and 943 infants in 1901. Forty-four deaths occurred in the homes during the year, against 29 in the preceding year, being equal to 47 per thousand, against 30·75 during 1901. This increased mortality is due to the epidemic of scarlet fever and measles, which has been general throughout the colony. The mortality throughout the colony of infants under four years of age (the age to which the Act applies) rose from 26·37 per thousand in 1901 to 31·11 last year.

The mortality in the homes will always considerably exceed the general mortality of the colony, for the reasons I have stated in previous reports.

During the year 18 licensees were prosecuted for breaches of Act, and 12 convictions resulted, against 11 prosecutions and 10 convictions in 1901, and one license was cancelled.

CONDUCT OF MEMBERS OF THE FORCE.

During the past year, I regret to say, it has been found necessary to impose a larger number of punishments than during the preceding year, although taking it generally the conduct of the men cannot be said to have deteriorated to any appreciable extent.

Two men were dismissed during the year, and the services of four others were dispensed with. Six men were convicted for offences in connection with drink, but in none of these cases was the offence one of downright drunkenness on duty. Two of the last-named offenders are no longer in the Force, and in the other cases reductions in pay and substantial fines were imposed.

TRAINING-DEPOT, CANDIDATES, ETC.

The training-depot continues to work well, and its effect on the men who have passed through it is very marked.

The benefit to the public arising from the instruction in ambulance-work received by every man who passes through the depot is demonstrated from time to time by the efficient “first aid” rendered in cases of accidents, &c.

Instruction in the system of taking the finger-prints of persons for the purposes of identification will in future be imparted to all men passing through the depot.

The number of eligible candidates continues to be very much in excess of the vacancies to be filled. At the commencement of the year under review there were several hundreds of eligible candidates on the list.

During the year there were 129 fresh candidates, who, after inquiry, measurement, &c., were found to be eligible for the service.

Forty-eight men were taken on during the year. The nationalities, religions, and occupations of these 48 men are as follows:—Nationalities: New-Zealand-born, 35; English, 3; Scotch, 4; Irish, 2; Australian, 3; and American, 1. Religions: Church of England, 23; Presbyterians, 10; Roman Catholics, 11; and Wesleyans, 4. Occupations: Labourers, 18; farmers, 9; miners, 3; storemen, 3; ploughmen, 2; carpenters, 2; carters, 2; clerk, 1; asylum warder, 1; baker, 1; road contractor, 1; station-hand, 1; platelayer, 1; hotel-manager, 1; seaman, 1; and engine-driver, 1.

POLICE PROVIDENT FUND.

On the 31st March last the amount standing to the credit of the fund was £18,418 5s. 3d., being an increase on the year of £3,839 14s. On the same date there were on the fund 3 ex-inspectors, 10 ex-sergeants, and 15 ex-constables, 1 ex-detective, and the widow and 3 orphans of a deceased constable, their aggregate annual allowances being £3,021 15s. 11d.

Since the Act came into force the Government have saved the sum of £9,646 10s. 7d. in the form of retiring-allowances, which would no doubt have been paid had it not existed.

STATIONS, ETC.

During the year the following buildings have been erected or are now in course of erection, viz. :—

New stations at—Denniston; Havelock; King Street, Dunedin; Onehunga; Ormondville; Patea; and Taihape. New lock-ups at—Invercargill; Mount Cook, Wellington; and Weber; and new stable at Ongarue.

Extensive additions, repairs, &c., have been carried out at the following stations, viz: Ashburton; Christchurch (Inspector's residence); Dannevirke; Fairlie; Geraldine; Kaiapoi; Kawhia; Leeston; Lumsden; Napier; Ponsonby; Port Awanui; St. Bathans; Temuka; Waitotara; and Woodville.

New stations are much required at—Akaroa; Featherston (in place of one recently destroyed by fire); Gore; Helensville; Karangahake; Kihikihi; Lower Hutt; Mangaweka; Raglan; Te Awamutu; Tolago Bay; Waiuku; and Whangarei; and constable's quarters at Waihi.

The additions to Lambton Quay and Mount Cook Stations, for which votes were taken last session, are much needed; and the single men's quarters at Christchurch, which are old and insanitary, require replacing by new.

A new station for the accommodation of about twenty men, with sergeant's residence, is also much needed in the Newton district of Auckland, to supersede the three small stations now in that locality. Three sections have recently been leased by the Government from the Auckland City Council for the erection thereon of the required station, and this should be put in hand without delay.