

In December, 1906, the Government Printing Office, at Wellington, was broken into and stamps to the value of £800 stolen. On the loss of the stamps being discovered by the Printing Office staff, a finger-print expert was sent over to examine the premises for finger-impressions, and, on examination, found a number of finger-impressions on the broken glass of the window through which access was gained to the premises and on the broken glass of the window of the room from which the stamps were taken. The finger-marked glass was carefully extracted and taken possession of by the expert and the prints carefully photographed. Search for corresponding impressions amongst those filed in the finger-print cabinet was without result. Exactly a year afterwards the premises of Messrs. Whitcombe and Tombs, of Wellington, were broken into, and goods, chiefly gold-mounted fountain-pens, to the value of £140 were stolen. On the show-case containing the fountain-pens a number of finger-prints were found, and comparison of the impressions with those found at the Government Printing Office showed that they were identical. That the person who broke into the Government Printing Office was the same person who committed the offence at Messrs. Whitcombe and Tombs was now certain, but as to his identity no evidence was forthcoming until the latter part of April of this year, when the prints of a man named Hemingway, who was in custody at Wellington on a charge of breaking and entering the General Post Office were submitted to the branch for inquiry as to his antecedents. On receipt of these prints they were within a quarter of an hour identified as those of the person who broke into the Government Printing Office and Messrs. Whitcombe and Tombs, and, on the fact being made known to Hemingway that his finger-prints had been thus identified, he admitted his guilt, pleaded guilty to the two offences, and was sentenced to three years' imprisonment—a lenient sentence under the circumstances. But for the finger-prints being traced and identified, these two serious crimes would have remained undetected.

The photographic portion of the branch is still of great service in photographing and enlarging finger-impressions. The photographs of prisoners in Wellington Gaol are also taken by the branch, and prepared for insertion in the *Police Gazette*.

From the foregoing it will be observed that the efficiency of this branch of the service has been well maintained, and its importance cannot be overestimated. The system which obtains in classifying finger-prints, recording the previous convictions of criminals, and filing photographs is complete, and has been carefully and diligently worked by the two finger-print experts employed therein.

TRAINING OF CANDIDATES, ETC.

The accommodation now provided for the training of probationers is eminently satisfactory. New barracks, with latest improvements and every convenience, have recently been erected at Newtown, which provides for a long-felt want.

The benefits derived from the instruction imparted to probationers at the training-depot still prove beneficial, and is of the greatest assistance to them when appointed to ordinary police work.

The weekly classes held in the four cities enable young constables to continue their instruction, and afford every opportunity of a thorough knowledge of police work being obtained.

During the year there were 137 fresh candidates who, after inquiry, measurement, &c., were found to be eligible for the service. A sufficient number of suitable candidates is still forthcoming to fill all vacancies and augmentations to the strength of the Force, but, generally speaking, the class of candidate now offering is not quite so satisfactory as one would desire. The only means to improve the standard of applicants for employment in the Force is to offer some inducement in the form of an increased rate of pay, which would undoubtedly supplement the number of candidates and result in a better selection being made from a larger field than exists at present.

I know of no Police Force in which more strict investigation is made in respect to the previous character, &c., of applicants, none being accepted unless their records are unblemished, and unless their educational qualifications are equal to the Fifth Standard.

They receive a sound training whilst on two months' probation, and it is only when tried and proved it is found that a number of those selected lack energy, and pay no regard to the duties required of them, occasionally indulging too freely in intoxicants, which results in their downfall and discredit to the Force.

I cannot, however, say that present candidates are inferior in class to candidates for other Police Forces, as from experience I am aware that young constables are generally the greatest source of trouble to the heads of Police Departments, and it is advisable to dispense with their services as soon as evidence of their uselessness is forthcoming. It is of course impossible to always foresee and prevent an occasional undesirable occurrence arising in any large body of men no matter how strictly supervised.

Ninety-six men were taken on during the year; their nationalities, religions, and occupations are as follows:—Nationalities: New-Zealand-born, 37; Australians, 18; Irish, 20; English, 12; Scotch, 7; Tasmanian, 1; Manxman, 1. Religions: Church of England, 34; Roman Catholics, 32; Presbyterians, 22; Wesleyan, 1; Baptist, 1; Protestants, 4; Lutheran, 1; Congregationalist, 1.

Occupations: Labourers, 24; farm labourers, 10; miners, 2; artillerymen, 6; butcher, 1; carters, 3; clerks, 6; baker, 1; shepherd, 1; ex-constables, 5; grocer, 1; asylum attendants, 2; blacksmiths, 5; ploughman, 1; soldier, 1; storekeeper, 1; groom, 1; cycle engineer, 1; motorman, 1; shoemaker, 1; farmers, 8; tutor, 1; railway porters, 2; cheesemaker, 1; surfaceman, 1; cabinet-makers, 2; dredgeman, 1; sheet-iron worker, 1; salesman, 1; school-teacher, 1; coachman, 1; commercial traveller, 1; plumber, 1.

POLICE PROVIDENT FUND.

On 31st March last the amount standing to the credit of the fund was £31,813 7s. 10d., being an increase on the year of £1,276 2s. 3d. On the same date there were on the fund 4 ex-Inspectors, 23 ex-sergeants, 46 ex-constables, 4 ex-detectives, and 2 widows of deceased constables, their aggregate annual allowances being £7,529 15s. 7d.