

violence were somewhat more numerous last year than they were during the two preceding ones; a result which can only be accounted for by the large number of men who have been massed together engaged in the public works of the province. The decrease which has been noted in the number of arrests for drunkenness during 1873 has been continued up to the present, and has mainly arisen from the increase of prosperity throughout the country, the growth of Good Templarism, the absence of many confirmed drunkards from the city, who have left for other places, and the continued efforts of the police and the Magistracy to suppress vagrancy. For many years past Auckland has been infested with a number of idle vagrants, who have lived by begging in the public streets, and went to swell the criminal lists of drunkards and vagrants. These, I am happy to say, are no longer an eye-sore to the public, having been forced by the operation of the Vagrant Act to turn to some other means of obtaining a livelihood. Formerly, such offenders, having perhaps a list of fifty previous convictions against them for drunkenness, vagrancy, and petty larceny, received sentences of one month or so; but latterly, the Bench has thought fit to increase the term to twelve months' imprisonment, and the change has been in every way beneficial, having tended already to clear the town of vagrants and beggars.

Not knowing if any criminal statistics are published in any of the other provinces, I cannot say whether less crime prevails here than elsewhere; but so far as I can judge, a comparison would not be in our favour, more especially as regards vagrancy and drunkenness. That a reduction could be made in the crime of the district I have no doubt, effected by largely increasing the number of constables, and expending a liberal sum in maintaining an efficient police force. The number of lunatics taken in charge during the year is worthy of note. The majority, perhaps, of the fifty-three arrested were suffering from *delirium tremens*, arising from the effects of drunkenness and adulterated liquors. It is well known that most of the spirits sold here and elsewhere throughout New Zealand, are highly adulterated, and if taken in large quantities are a dangerous poison. "The Adulteration of Food Act, 1866," could, with a few amendments, be made effective in the prevention of the sale of such spirits; but in its present form it must remain a nullity, as it compels the purchaser of food or drink to deposit a sum not exceeding five pounds, with the view of having the article analyzed by the Colonial Analyst. If the Act were left to the police to enforce, a vast improvement would soon be effected in the quality of liquors sold in public-houses.

You will observe that 36 children were taken in charge under the Neglected and Criminal Children's Act. Most of these were either deserted by their parents or were the children of criminals. A few of them were known petty thieves, but, in the absence of a reformatory, were sent to the Industrial School along with the other children. Their unfitness for that institution became soon apparent, as they not only absconded from the school themselves, but caused some of the other children to follow their example, and created such disorder that it is quite evident such a class of children should not be admitted.

The question of education has lately engaged the attention of the public here to a large extent. The Education Act introduced last year has been highly beneficial in causing a large increase in the number of children who attend school, and in affording education to the children of the back lanes and alleys of the city, who, before the Act was passed, received no education whatever. Much still remains to be done in this respect; but so long as the Act has been in operation, its good effects have been clearly visible.

During the year a large number of destructive fires have occurred in the city, and property of the value probably of £115,000 has been destroyed. The number of fires in Auckland do not perhaps exceed those of other places with as large a population, and with the same class of wooden buildings, but they are much more destructive, from the fact that we are, I may say, entirely devoid of a water supply; and our fire brigade bears no comparison in point of efficiency to the brigades of the southern provinces. When a fire occurs, it usually burns while it has got materials to feed upon, and only ends when it reaches an open space, or comes in contact with a brick building. There is no evidence to show that any of the late fires were the result of incendiarism, although the probability is that some of them were; but the difficulty of detection in such cases I need scarcely mention. A crime which can be committed by the mere act of throwing away a lighted match, which may be done through mere carelessness (and a jury will always believe that such was the case, when it comes to be a question of whether it was done carelessly or wilfully, and which can only be judged of by the intention), requires an amount of ingenuity in its discovery beyond the ability of any detective skill; and the few convictions which have ever taken place for this offence, have occurred through the want of prudence or judgment on the part of the offender, who, by some omission, left a clue by which detection followed. The absence of a water supply tends much to the growth of incendiarism, as the materials used in raising the fire are invariably destroyed in the conflagration; and the close competition amongst insurance offices is another source from which incendiarism arises. In the desire of increasing business, insurances are effected on premises without due inquiry. The large amount of insurance offers a strong temptation to the person insured; and when to this is added a decline in business, the inducement becomes too great, and crime follows. A case in point occurred here lately. A person insured his stock for £60; some time afterwards he increased his insurance to £100, without any inquiry being made by the office. Shortly after this, the place was discovered on fire early in the evening, at a time when no person was on the premises, and in a place where it could not well have been the result of accident. Fortunately, a few of the neighbours discovered it, and quickly succeeded in extinguishing it. After doing so, the police got a competent person to value the stock, who stated that it was worth, at the outside, not more than £35. I cannot say that the fire was the work of an incendiary, but it bears a very suspicious appearance.

The Act for the regulation of quartz crushing machines, which was brought into force shortly after the date of my last annual report, has operated most satisfactorily in the suppression of specimen tealing. Owing to the exertions of Sub-Inspector Bullen and the Thames Constabulary, several convictions have taken place under it, in the last of which the defendant was fined in the sum of £200—a punishment which, no doubt, will deter many from following his example. The society formed here for the prevention of specimen stealing has expressed its approval of the conduct of the police, and signifies its intention of supporting them to the utmost in enforcing the law.