

Since Inspector McGovern assumed charge of the Bay of Islands District there have been 24 convictions for sly grog-selling within its boundaries, in which fines and costs to the amount of £412 have been inflicted. I attribute the suppression of this fertile source of crime almost entirely to the efforts of the Inspector, who has infused new life into men who, for some years, had practically been their own masters, without the supervision of either officers or sergeants. Small wonder that these men, who were beyond the influence of either admonition or encouragement, should have grown supine. The Inspector at Auckland has been in no way to blame for this state of things: he had simply too many duties to perform, and attended to the most important.

I have stated that there is a decrease in the crime of arson. This, however, requires explanation, for the police have every reason to believe that numerous instances of this crime remain undetected and unpunished, not from want of suspicion or vigilance, but from the want of sufficient evidence to justify a criminal information. The only solution of the difficulty would appear to be condensed in the recommendation of a London jury in a late case, viz., "That provision should be made by law for an official inquiry into the origin and circumstances of all fires. That such inquiry would tend to diminish the frequency of fires by making felony more easy of detection, and by bringing public censure, if not punishment, on persons responsible for fires arising from carelessness or want of precaution. That the information and statistics which would result from searching-fire inquiries would expose faulty and inferior work, and thus lead to improvements in building construction."

There is a general impression among the public that the insurance companies are primarily responsible for many of the suspicious fires, but, without committing myself to so strong an opinion as the above, I may, nevertheless, say that so long as house-owners are allowed to over-insure, so long will there be suspicious fires, and the police powerless to stop them.

Among the many duties performed by the police outside of their own special functions as guardians of the peace the following may be enumerated: Agents of Public Trustee, Bailiffs, Clerks of Resident Magistrates' Courts and Licensing Committees, Collectors of Agricultural Statistics, compilers of jury-lists, Inspectors of Weights and Measures, Slaughterhouses, Distilleries, and Factories, Licensing Officers under Arms Act, Mining Registrars, Magazine-keepers, Officers under Beer Duty Act, Police Gaolers, Postmasters and Telephonists, Receivers of Gold Revenue, Supervisors of the Estates of Lunatics and Intestates, and Truant Officers under School Boards. Numerous as these duties are, I cannot say that they have, as yet, interfered materially with police-work proper. I must, however, make an exception to this statement in the instance of Inspectors of Weights and Measures. Here we have at least four men whose services are entirely taken up in these duties, and consequently lost to the police, and there are others whose time theoretically is only partially occupied, but who practically are of very little use to their department, for the reason that in a town the duties are so divided that if a man cannot be depended on to take his regular turn of beat-duty he becomes an extra man, and, as such, of comparatively little use. In Auckland there is a first-class sergeant employed in the above capacity at a cost of £191 per annum, and there can be no doubt that the work would be equally well done by a civilian at £100, there being nothing in the work that a very ordinary man might not do. Much the same prevails at each of the chief centres of population, where the Police Department is paying men to do work which I respectfully submit should not devolve on the force except in out-districts.

I would also bring before your notice that some Inspectors complain that Resident Magistrates require the police to attend the civil sittings of their Courts. This practice is inconvenient, and takes men away from their duties on the streets unnecessarily, for by sections 13 and 14 of "The Resident Magistrates Act, 1867," it is provided that bailiffs shall attend sittings of Courts, and shall have the powers of constables. It would, therefore, appear that there is no actual necessity for the presence of the police on these occasions.

In the first part of my report I have mentioned that there are thirteen district constables employed, being an increase of five on the previous year. These men are paid at rates ranging from £20 to £100, but the general average of their pay does not exceed £60 per annum. This class of constable meets the requirements of small or isolated districts, where there is not sufficient work for one of the regular staff (whose whole time should be fully occupied), but where it is absolutely necessary to have a representative of the force. There have been grave objections hitherto to this class of constable, viz., that they never acquired sufficient knowledge of their duties or of the law of the land to make them efficient guardians of the police; and, secondly, that, being taken from the settlers of a district among whom they have resided for many years, they would have acquired all the prejudices and animosities incidental to such a life—a state of feeling highly prejudicial to their usefulness as police constables, and one not calculated to engender confidence in the settlers' minds. Such have been, and no doubt will continue to be, the objections felt and expressed towards district constables. But, on the other hand, it is absolutely necessary to have such officers, for I estimate that there are at least twenty sub-districts now in charge of members of the regular force which could be more economically and as satisfactorily worked by district constables. Such being the case, I would suggest for your consideration the advisability of effecting this alteration whenever it is found convenient to do so, viz., by filling up the district constable-ships from superannuated members of the regular force, men who, though unable to perform the eight hours' hard duty in the streets of a town, or to make long journeys on horseback through rough country, would nevertheless be quite equal to the duties of district constables, and, from previous training, would be competent to assume the clerkships of Resident Magistrates' Courts, bailiffs, and other work, in an efficient manner. I would suggest that such men would be fairly paid at £60 per annum, since their time would be but partially occupied, and there would be nothing to prevent them supplementing their incomes by entering into farming or other pursuits.

During the past year a modification of the Victorian regulations as to the attendance of police at sports, races, or other public amusements wherein an entrance-fee is demanded has been adopted. This step was rendered necessary by the large sums of money paid under this head, in