

show a decrease—namely: Assault and robbery, 4; burglary and breaking into shops, 24; carnally knowing girls, 3; cruelty to animals, 5; disobeying orders of Court and summonses, 22; disorderly and riotous conduct, 11; illegally on premises, 9; malicious injury to property, 12; neglected and criminal children, 19; opium smoking and being in possession of, 12; theft by servants, 8; theft from dwellings, 17; theft from the person, 4; and vagrancy, 13.

On the 31st March last the strength of the Force in this district was 1 Inspector, 1 Sub-Inspector, 1 station sergeant, 11 sergeants, 75 constables, 3 detectives, 1 district constable, 1 matron.

The casualties were: Retired under Police Provident Fund Act, 1 sergeant, 1 constable; resigned, 5 constables.

There has been a slight increase (28) in the number of persons dealt with for drunkenness during the year.

There have been 24 prosecutions for sly-grog selling during the year, and fines to the amount of £350 16s. have been inflicted. This class of offence got a strong check in the Clutha district during the year by the conviction of two persons against whom there was no evidence other than the fact that they purchased abnormal quantities of liquor at a hotel close by the no-license boundary and took it to the no-license area. Portion of the Clutha Electoral District is now in the Southland Police District—that is, Tapanui and Clinton Stations—the change having been made on the 31st December last.

During the year there were 59 registered homes in this district. Five deaths occurred in such homes during the year, an inquest being held in each case, which in every instance went to show that the home-keeper did all that human power could accomplish in alleviating the sufferer in each case. One prosecution took place for breaches of the Act during the year, and one conviction recorded. Several applications for licenses have been refused, the applicants not being deemed suitable.

Licensed hotels have invariably been well conducted during the year, particularly in the city. There have been 12 prosecutions against licensees, resulting in 5 convictions. The amendment to the Licensing Act made in 1904 making it an offence to be found on licensed premises after the hours of closing at night or on Sundays has been a great boon, and continues to give full satisfaction.

Sunday trading in shops is much indulged in, particularly by tobacconists and sellers of cordials. The recent amendment to "The Police Offences Act, 1884," rendering it unnecessary for the police to prove that the transaction took place within view of a public place, has greatly assisted the prosecution in such cases.

The conduct of members of the Force has, with a few trifling exceptions, been exemplary—and considering that the majority of them are but young in the service, they have on the whole proved themselves fairly efficient.

The appointment of a station sergeant in the city has filled a long-felt want, and is giving entire satisfaction. Hitherto it was utterly impossible, owing to the increased office duties of Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors, for these officers to give that amount of outside supervision which was necessary.

INSPECTOR A. J. MITCHELL, INVERCARGILL DISTRICT.

The strength of the Invercargill Police District on the 31st March last was 1 Inspector, 4 sergeants, 31 constables, and 1 detective, being an increase of 4 constables over that for the previous year, and due (a) to the inclusion of Tapanui and Clinton Stations in this district on the 1st January, 1907; (b) to the opening of the Gladstone Station, 6th July, 1906; and (c) to augmenting the staff at Invercargill Central Station by 1 constable.

Sergeant Fleming retired on three months' leave in July, 1906, and thereafter the Queenstown police staff was reduced by 1 sergeant and increased by 1 constable, which fully meets the requirements of that sub-district. This allowed Invercargill Central Station to be benefited by an additional sergeant being appointed to it, and thus enabling very fair supervision to be maintained over the beat-duty constables both by day and night.

No-license obtained in the Invercargill Licensing District on the 1st July last, consequent upon which—(a) brewery depots were established at Waikiwi, on the margin of the no-license area, at which youths and men purchase beer in 2gal. and 5gal. kegs, oftentimes when not in a fit state to be supplied. It is by no means an uncommon sight to see a number of young fellows collected round a keg on the roadside, or in an adjoining paddock, some of them showing signs of excessive drinking, and yet the police are helpless to control such sales, the vendors being subjected to no restrictions. (b.) The locker system came into existence at four establishments here. This system as carried on is, I think, an undoubted evasion of the law. The closing of the open bar has materially improved the order and conduct in the streets, and to my own knowledge many homes that formerly knew misery through its existence now enjoy happiness and contentment. At the same time, the consumption of liquor in Southland, as shown in the Customs return, has not decreased. During the nine months ended the 31st March last 78 cases of drunkenness were before the Invercargill Court, and in all cases but one the supply of liquor was conclusively traced to sources outside the no-license area—Bluff, by rail 17 miles; Woodlands, by rail 12 miles; Wallacetown, by road or rail 5 miles; and Waikiwi depots, by road 3 miles—so that it will be readily seen the facilities for obtaining liquor are numerous, and prevent no-license receiving a fair trial. During the same period 5 convictions have been recorded here for sly-grog selling, resulting in fines totalling £250; and, though we have a population of over 13,000, there is no reason to believe that illicit sales of liquor are at present being carried on to any appreciable extent.

The conduct of the members of the Force during the year has been on the whole good, and through attention to their duties the percentage of undetected crime in this district has been small.